

THE LIFE AND LETTERS OF
GEORGE DARLEY
POET AND CRITIC

BY
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TO
PROFESSOR SIR ARTHUR QUILLER-COUCH

*He who the syren's hawr would win
Is mostly strangled in the tide.*

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PREFACE

THE life of George Darley should have been written long ago, when the collection of documents would have been a comparatively simple task, and many were still living who remembered him. But Darley was a shy and disappointed man whose achievements, at his death in 1846, were known only to the few. To the general public he had never been more than a name. It was natural, therefore, that neglect should, for a time, continue to be his lot. In any case his biographer would have inherited little material from the poet himself, since it seems that Darley destroyed before he died all documents and letters in his possession.

Before his last illness he had, as we know on his own authority, many manuscripts of unpublished works by him. In addition, his friendships with well-known literary men promise a correspondence of more than usual interest. The manuscripts and the letters written to him have alike disappeared. The family story, which there seems little reason to question, is that they were burned either by Darley himself or his brother William. He was not, I am told, a man who would keep letters, or allow work in manuscript, perhaps uncompleted or unrevised, to survive him. The explanation is in accord with what we know of the man. Writing to Lady Gregory in 1899, Sir Frederic Burton says, 'Darley had an infinite number of small pocket-books, filled with notes and references made in his multifarious reading, in a neat vertical hand, which he told me he adopted because it could be compressed into a smaller compass. I wonder what has become of them.' They were no doubt likewise destroyed. As far as I can discover, no manuscript of his, or letter written to him, has ever appeared in a sale-room or bookseller's catalogue. The two extant manuscripts have always been in the possession of his relatives.

Matter of the first importance is thus beyond my reach in writing this life of Darley. If it should, fortunately, somewhere exist, it will make a rich book. ~~My task has thus been rather the~~

patient collection of material that would give an adequate picture of the man than a careful sifting of accumulated documents. I cannot hope to have traced all Darley's surviving letters, though that has been one of my aims, and I should be glad to know of any further letters. Nor can I hope to have escaped the dangers attending one who deals with evidence admittedly incomplete, and in particular the danger of emphasizing the comparatively unimportant. But every biographer is beset in the same way, and I believe that the emphasis in this account of Darley falls, broadly speaking, in the right places.

This is the first time that an attempt has been made to write Darley's biography. It was preceded by certain short biographical sketches, to the most important of which, those by R. and M. J. Livingstone and R. A. Streatfeild, I am indebted, in company with all other students of Darley. Whenever possible I have let him speak for himself. Critics have too readily supposed that there was little to know about the poet, and they have interpreted too literally a statement in one of his letters that his life was an abstraction. In reality, as I have tried to show, he lived a full and important life as poet, man of letters, and critic. This life, superficially observed, is uneventful, merely the story of a man with a stammer who seemed to fail as a poet. But in its essentials, the inward struggle of the poet and his courageous general attitude towards life, it is of peculiar value. Since it is my purpose to give a coherent account of a writer who is, save to the few, little known, I have placed his letters, as far as I am able, in their context, and I have interspersed, of necessity, some account of his works. His prose, indeed, has been almost completely neglected, and I believe I am the first to explore his contributions to *The London Magazine* and *The Athenæum*.

I was led to Darley when working on a study of T. L. Beddoes. It was soon evident that the text of Darley's poems needed revision, and that a good deal of work remained unreprinted. I determined to write the Life first, but I have gathered the materials necessary to a critical edition of the poems, since such an edition

is needed, and I have in preparation a selection from the prose writings. There is much work still to be done in the period which includes Darley. Mr R. W. King's very able biography of H. F. Cary has appeared since these words were written, but we still await with impatience Mr Blunden's Life of Leigh Hunt and his Life of John Clare. It is time that some one wrote an adequate account of Barry Cornwall and his friendships, Allan Cunningham deserves attention. Then there is Thomas Wade and his work; and so romantic a subject as the life of R. H. Horne goes begging. Nor is that all.

I have many obligations to acknowledge. I am particularly indebted to Miss Evelyn Darley, who has shown the greatest interest in this book; she has lent me the material at her disposal, including a manuscript, her copies of *Nepenthe*, family documents, photographs of portraits, and all those relevant family letters written by Darley that are in her possession. Without her help the book would hardly have been possible. I owe much also to the kindness of the Hon. Mrs. Livingstone, who has allowed me to use the important manuscript, *Lenumina Laborum*; to Miss F. L. Henderson for the loan of her annotated copy of *Nepenthe* and for photographs of two portraits; and to another member of the family for early records. To the Marquess of Crewe I am indebted for the valuable series of letters to his father, Richard Monckton Milnes (first Lord Houghton); to Miss O. M. Taylor for letters of John Taylor and J. A. Hessey; and to Major S. Butterworth for a letter to J. A. Hessey. Mr John Drinkwater generously allowed me to use four letters to Allan Cunningham in his possession (these have since been printed by him, inaccurately dated I think, in *A Book for Bookmen*); Mr. R. W. King most kindly sent me copies of the letters to H. F. Cary, from the Devon MSS., that he has since printed in his biography of Cary. The other letters used, with the exception of one to Cunningham in my possession and another in the Bodleian, have been printed before, either in whole or in part, in various books or periodicals chronicled in the bibliography. But they had never before been brought together.

I have followed, without comment, Darley's spelling and punctuation in the letters whose originals I have been able to consult, and in all extracts from his work. Those dates enclosed in square brackets are my own conjectures.

I have to thank Mr. Edmund Blunden for his unfailing interest in Darley and this book, shown in many ways, and especially for allowing me to quote from Clare's remarks on the 'Londoners', and from certain letters to Clare concerning Darley that he had already used. I am grateful to those friends and strangers who have either offered help, or gladly accorded it when asked, on individual points, and I owe much to the courtesy of the present editor of the *Nation and Athenæum*, and of librarians at Aberdeen, Cambridge, and the British Museum. Finally, I wish to express my gratitude to Professor Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch for his generous encouragement; to Professor George Gordon, Professor Lascelles Abercrombie, and Professor A. A. Jack for many a wise criticism and suggestion; and to Mr. Frederick Page, a 'jealous honourer' of Darley, to whose solicitude this book owes much. Mr. Page also helped to read the proofs, and made himself responsible for the index.

The portrait that may possibly be that of George Darley is one of three small studies of male heads made by William Darley, the poet's brother, and found in a portfolio belonging to him. At William's death this portfolio became the property of his sister Mary Newenham, and passed to her daughter Lady Cooper, who left it to her sister Mrs. Henderson, the present owner's mother. Only one of the studies, the one unnamed and unsigned, is in question.

No family tradition attaches to the studies. Miss Henderson does not remember that her aunt or mother spoke of them. Miss Evelyn Darley, who also knew Lady Cooper well, had not heard of them. Indeed, none of the family that I have been able to consult has seen, or heard tell of, a portrait of George Darley, or of his brother Charles. The study certainly represents neither the youngest brother, Henry, nor William himself. The possibilities

are strongly against its being Charles. He was more 'sociable' and better known to his relatives than George. Miss Henderson tells me that her mother 'often spoke of her uncles, especially Charles, whom she knew best'. It is unlikely, therefore, that she would have failed to mention the study, had it been a portrait of Charles.

I think it is very possibly a portrait of George. That was my immediate thought on seeing it. The bare forehead, the hair, dark brown and waving, the eyes, nose, mouth, and general cast of feature, are in full accord with the descriptions of the poet, seen later in his life, given by relatives. It is not surprising that the portrait should have escaped recognition. George was the least known of the brothers to members of the family, and William, who lived mainly in France, did not die till 1857, eleven years after his brother. He would naturally not think it necessary to name the study, which, if the dates on the other sketches can be used as a guide, was made *c.* 1842.

The book, in its original form, was accepted as a dissertation for the Ph D degree of the University of Cambridge. The Committee of the Carnegie Trust have kindly guaranteed a grant of £50 against a possible financial loss on the publication.

C. C. A.

KING'S COLLEGE,
ABERDEEN,
October, 1928.

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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

An unnamed portrait in oils, by William Darley, that may possibly represent George Darley. (From the original in the possession of Miss F L Henderson) *Frontispiece*

William Darley. Painted by himself and left unfinished (Photograph by Frank Foy, from the portrait in the possession of Miss F. L. Henderson.) *Facing p 98*

Henry Darley, the poet's paternal uncle (Photograph by Will Rose, • from the portrait in the possession of Miss Evelyn Darley) *Facing p. 214*

Henrietta, Laura, and Mary Darley From a painting by Sir Frederic William Burton, in the possession of Miss Evelyn Darley (Photograph by Will Rose.) *Facing p 256*

I. 1795-1822

*Early Years. London 'The Errors of Ecstasie'
Letters to Miss Neaul*

It matters little, save to those whose passion is the conduct of a family-tree, whether the ancestors of George Darley came to Ireland from Yorkshire or France. There are family traditions that might be coaxed to support either theory.¹ It would, perhaps, be interesting to lead up to our subject step by step from the Norman knight who was granted estates in Yorkshire and Derbyshire by the Conqueror, and to make incidental mention of such Darleys as the crusader who fell at Ascalon and him who brought over from Aleppo in Queen Anne's reign that fabulous stallion, the Darley Arabian, sire of Flying Childers. To one skilled in the mazes of genealogy this might, indeed, be possible. We will start, however, with our first undoubted fact, with the poet's great-great-grandfather, Henry Darley of Newtownards, County Down, quarry owner and stone-cutter. Little is known about him; in 1708 his signature appears in the Newtownards parish register, and in 1714 he was appointed overseer of roads. He had three sons, Moses, Arthur, and Hugh, the first of whom is, for our purpose, essential only to the understanding of a mistake made current by Miss Mitford when she wrote that the poet was the son of a rich Dublin alderman who had disinherited him because he would be a poet. It will be well to explain this error now. Moses, stone-cutter and builder, had, among other children, two sons who lived to marry, Henry and George. Henry, a contractor for public works, was a comparatively rich man. His side of the family was known as the 'long pockets', and as he was twice married and blessed with numerous children—tradition says twenty-four—he must have needed the money. One of these children was Frederick, an alderman of Dublin (a son of his, John, a contemporary of the poet, was a Fellow of Trinity College, Dublin), and another, Richard (father of John Darley, Bishop of

¹ The evidence of family tradition favours Yorkshire, and it is worthy of note that in 1804 the Ulster King of Arms 'ratified and confirmed' the claim of George Darley (second son of the Moses Darley mentioned later) to the armorial bearings of his ancestors, 'originally of Yorkshire in England, with such difference as may be fitting to distinguish him (being of Irish descent) from the family of that name in England'.

Kilmore). Miss Mitford's mistake is therefore pardonable. Several of the immediate descendants of Moses held commissions in the British army. A grandson, John Sankey Darley, major of the 2nd West India Regiment, lost his life during a mutiny at Jamaica in 1808.

Our main concern, however, is with the lines of Arthur and Hugh, for the poet's parents were cousins, both Darleys, and it is from these brothers that his father and mother were descended. Arthur Darley, stone-cutter of Newtownards, born in 1692, was twice married. By his first wife he had one son, Edward, to whom family story assigns an unnaturally stony heart. His second wife was Mary Worling (or Wirling), the daughter of a Presbyterian minister, and she bore him six children. He died suddenly in September 1742, leaving no will, and his property passed to Edward, who showed scant consideration for the widow and her family. Her eldest boy went to sea and died on the coast of Guinea, so that to her second son George, born in 1731, the grandfather of the poet, was left the task of making a career for himself and providing some comfort for his mother. He was equal to the emergency. When about eleven years old he was taken from school and apprenticed to his half-brother Edward, who owned quarries in County Down, but at seventeen he went to Dublin to seek his fortune. Family history has a Whittington-like legend to tell of him, how, when tramping to the capital, he fell asleep exhausted by the roadside and woke to find a bright shilling near him, within a few steps another, and again others until he had picked up seventeen, the number of his years. It is a pretty story that at least deserves to be true, but the probabilities are that he was employed by his first cousin, the successful contractor Henry, the father of the alderman. He quickly became his own man as builder, made a position of some independence, and went down to the north in his own chaise to fetch his mother and a sister to live with him at the house he had built in Mercer Street. When about twenty-one he married Jane Johnstone of Annandale, only child of an army captain, and they had in all seventeen children. Of these we need mention only Arthur, the poet's father, born on 28 November 1766, who comes midway in that imposing list,¹ and Henry, born on 2 October 1770, who became a man of substance and was among the friends

¹ Of the eight children who preceded Arthur six died in infancy and the other two, who lived longer, were girls. The poet's father was thus the eldest surviving son.

and correspondents of the poet. Prosperity blessed the ventures of George Darley. He built a house at Ballybetagh for the summer months, and later Springfield, the Scalp, County Dublin, which became his sole residence. Here part of the poet's boyhood was spent.

Hugh Darley (1701-71), the ancestor of the poet's mother, was a well-known architect and builder, of Abbey Street, Dublin. He was a man of considerable property, and at his death he left his houses in various parts of Dublin to his nephew George Darley, 'master builder', and to his son John. This John,¹ born in 1731, collector of customs at Newry in the north of Ireland, married as his third wife Sarah Nixon of Dublin, and Mary, the poet's mother, was one of his very many children—family records say twenty-six—who lived. Large families were thus not uncommon to the Darleys, and it is perhaps worthy of note that both the poet's parents were members of such. The fact that the children were many led naturally enough to a spirit of adventure, or, at all events, to a need for it. A cousin of the poet, one of his valued correspondents in his last years, left a few jottings about her ancestors which she thought might interest younger members of the family. In these she draws a comparison between the Darleys and the Guinnesses, families intimately connected. 'The Darleys seem to have been a more erratic, wandering race than the Guinnesses,' she writes. 'You hear more of them up and down through the world, and consequently I fear the old adage of a rolling stone holds good in their case as opposed to the more stay-at-home and prosperous Guinnesses.' She notes a characteristic Darley cast of features—strongly marked with a sweet, grave expression bordering on melancholy—and has much to say of her grandfather Richard Guinness, born in 1755, at whose house in Dublin might be met such company as Chief Justice Bushe, the actors J. P. Kemble and Charles Mayne Young, the patriot Grattan, and the brilliant Curran. In his youth this Richard Guinness won a tribute from Burke, a pretty speech from Miss Anna Seward, the Swan of Lichfield ('Good-bye, Mr. Guinness; since we knew Major André we have met with no young man who has interested us so much'), and a compliment from Mrs. Lefanu, Sheridan's sister, who allowed the most agreeable man in the room to take Mrs. Siddons down to dinner. It was he who heard Dr. Johnson say to a small boy, 'Well, young Sir,

¹ His sister, Jane Darley, was known as the Queen of the Marshalsea because of her charitable work in the debtors' prison.

have you yet dived into the mysteries of Valentine and Orson?' But our poet waits to be born.

George, the eldest son of the seven children, four boys and three girls, of Arthur and Mary Darley, was born at Dublin in 1795. The father was, as far as we can judge, a rather feckless man who, from about 1815, possessed independent means.¹ There was little sympathy between the poet and him. The mother, who died in 1833, was a beautiful woman and a talented musician, well versed in Corelli, Handel, Mozart, and Beethoven. Her physical gifts descended in great measure to her children, and her love for music, too, found its echo in them. They were a fine-looking family distinguished by intellectual gifts far beyond the common. More will be said of the poet's brothers later; none of them had the physical robustness of the father, who lived till 1845. A brief mention of them must suffice here. William (1798-1857) lived chiefly in seclusion at Paris, an artist whose temperament allowed him to produce but little. He was the most like George in disposition. Charles, who held several curacies in England, was the first professor of Modern History and English Literature at Queen's College, Cork, and the author of the play *Plighted Troth*, produced by Macready at Drury Lane on the 20th of April 1842 with conspicuous ill-success. He died in 1861. Henry (1802-46) was a land-agent, with great social gifts, Count d'Orsay sketched his portrait. He married an heiress, Jane Warren Locke of Athgoe Park, Kildare. Of the poet's sisters Mary married Charles Newenham, one of the early settlers in South Australia and later High Sheriff of the colony; Anne married Samuel Boucicault and became the mother of Dion Boucicault, the well-known actor and author of such popular plays as *The Colleen Bawn* and *The Shaughraun*; and Eleanor Frances died unmarried in 1833.

Arthur Darley and his wife went to America soon after 1795. In October 1797 their son John, aged seven months, was buried at New York, and their son Charles was born in that city in 1800, according to the matriculation entries of Trinity College, Dublin.

¹ In August 1803 Arthur Darley was granted letters of administration for the estate of his brother John, who died, a bachelor, in New York. He is therein described as 'of Dublin, merchant'. In 1807 his name appears for the first time in the Dublin Directory as living at 3 Johnston's Place, and he is described as a grocer, an occupation he appears to have followed till 1813. In July 1808 he was granted letters of administration for the estate of his brother Hill, a Dublin wine merchant, and he benefited under his father's will of November 1813 (as did also his son George). In 1815 his wife benefited under her mother's will, wherein Arthur Darley is described as 'of Blackrock, Co. Dublin, Esquire'.

It is not known what occupation engaged Arthur Darley during his stay in America. He probably returned to Dublin before 1802, as his son Henry was born there in that year. While his parents were abroad George was entrusted to his grandfather, George Darley of Springfield, with whom he was a great favourite. Here he remained till he was about ten years old, and perhaps longer. This was one of the happiest periods of his life, and the impression made on him by the country round about, particularly by its mountains, glens, and wildness, was never effaced. The background to much of his work, both in prose and poetry, is Irish, not English, and it would be easy to point to poems and stories which grew from the recollections of those early days when he rode about his beloved country-side on a pony beside his grandfather. Springfield was the 'unforgettable home' of his childhood, 'the brightest sun which ever shone upon me broke over Ballybetagh mountains'. Again and again he refers, in his later letters to his Irish cousins, with the passion of an exile to scenes which had assumed for him a beauty almost legendary and which he revisits in imagination with joy. His spirit finds rest and escape there, among the wild glens and the grey rock of Barnaslingen, Killeager, and other mountains round the Scalp—not among the superimposed landscapes of England, France, and Italy. Yet it would be a mistake to imagine his childhood was one of unmingled happiness. When a child he thought himself miserable, he says, and quite early, following on a childish illness, that nervous hesitation began which made him 'much more full of thought than able for speech'.

When his parents returned, the family went to live at Dublin, where George eventually joined them. He was placed under a tutor, a Mr. Falloon, and in due course proceeded to Trinity College, Dublin, where he was admitted a pensioner on the 3rd of July 1815 at the age of twenty. The matriculation book tells us that his religion was Protestant, his father a gentleman, and his college tutor Mr. Gannon.

There is no record of the course of study he followed, but mathematics and classics must have been his main subjects and the reading of literature his chief diversion, though these were days when universities thought more of a general education than of specialized courses. We know, however, that Dr Bartholomew Lloyd, who was appointed to the Chair of Mathematics in 1813, revolutionized the study of that subject in Trinity College. In

1815 the course, which had hitherto been mainly geometrical, was rearranged, and the programme of lectures shows that a large advance was made at this time in teaching; the professor likewise lectured to the candidates for a Fellowship on the higher branches of mathematics. Darley did not graduate till 1820, but he did well enough to warrant his reading for a Fellowship, though he never seems to have been a professed candidate. At that time all such candidates were Scholars of the House, so on that account he was handicapped. Intense application, however, was too much for his health, and the sense of personal inadequacy made him so depressed and nervous that he relinquished the attempt. How long he gave to it is not known; nor can any college magazine to which he may have contributed be traced. The impediment in his speech closed most professions to him, and that of letters seems a natural, if hazardous, choice. Accordingly he came to London, probably towards the end of 1821, to conquer the literary world with a volume of poems in his pocket, money enough to pay for its publication, and a small allowance that could be eked out to a sufficiency by work done for the magazines. It was a brave venture for which he could quote precedents both successful and disastrous. He was no longer a boy; in comparison with most of his generation (he was born in the same year as Keats) he developed late. But it is easy to imagine the loneliness, anxiety, and disillusion of those first months for one never robust in health.

That impetus which derives from the lively and understanding confidence of others in our powers was denied him, at this critical time and later, by the indifference of those to whom he turned naturally for eager interest—by his own people. What evidence there is suggests that little intimate comradeship existed between the members of his family, though he himself often desired it. They were more indifferent to one another than actively zealous. Their intercourse seems to verge on the neutrality of strangers. The good fortune that gave Keats such devoted brothers as Tom and George was not Darley's, partly, perhaps, because all his brothers had readier and more attractive talents than he, and were men of restless temperament. His early separation from them may also have counted for something. It is strange that Darley, in the extant letters, should but once (writing in 1845) mention his mother, and then only to comment on her lack of sympathy. On his father's death he cannot 'affect deep sorrow' because, though he once loved him, the man he loved died long ago. When he

meets his father a few years before the latter's death it is almost as a stranger that he writes of him and his energy in travelling. Willingly he allows a remark made by a correspondent about him—'He seems more at home with Mr T——'s family than his own people'—to be characteristic of all the Arthur Darleys. It is plain that there was little affection, little intercourse, intellectual or other, between Darley and his parents. There is no doubt, either, that he had more need of these things than most men. Yet who shall apportion the blame, if blame there be? The poet would have been the first to allow grievous faults in himself. He is glad to hear good words spoken on behalf of his brother Henry, most anxious to have immediate news of his illness, after having made 'splenetic outbursts' against this brother who was the most alien to him in spirit. Of his three brothers William is the nearest to him, but even here the bond is not intimate. The poet, the artist, the professor-cleric, the man of fortune and fashion, each went his own way, not greatly concerned about the others. That, perhaps, is more natural than unnatural; but there is a strange lack of vitality in their relationship. The distressing stammer that was so desperate a handicap to the poet throughout life, and to which he refers again and again in terms that show how morbidly sensitive he became to it, may have hindered his personal intercourse with them all. It made him increasingly unwilling to form new friendships, more inclined to become a solitary, less willing to make efforts to break down barriers. From the beginning his life in London was that of a lonely man.

When Darley reached that city in 1821 he should have found, according to many critics, a calm (or even a blight) just beginning in the world of poetry. There is some reason for this opinion, and Darley himself would have endorsed it. Nevertheless, it is a curious exaggeration. Some of the older poets who still wrote were, it is true, adding little that was enduring to their fame. Wordsworth's best work was done. Now generally recognized as a great poet of steadily widening reputation, he was the not very lovable autocrat to be met in the letters of Keats. Coleridge was an eloquent and famous shade; Blake, conversing with the Spiritual Sun on Primrose Hill, still wrought and wrote in obscurity strange visions for his own happiness; Southey remained a prodigious worker. They likewise had given their best. But Landor, a sturdy tree full of sap to the last (he died, a splendid veteran, in 1864), had his most characteristic work to do, and

gracious Leigh Hunt, a comparatively young man already rich in experience, pursued his chequered career as journalist, poet, and essayist till 1859. Of the lesser men, Campbell was still to continue versifying in mediocre fashion, particularly in the *New Monthly Magazine*, and Rogers, an interesting and dangerous relic, did not die till 1855, well over ninety years old. Let us leave these men aside, and come to the younger generation. Keats, Shelley, and Byron died, prematurely, in 1821, 1822, and 1824 respectively, so that the succeeding years were deprived of a considerable part of the poetic output they might reasonably have expected. Of these poets, Byron won immediate fame and notoriety, at home and abroad, he was the ascendant star when Darley came to town and for a little time afterwards. Keats and Shelley, though appreciated by devotees, were little known in general. Taylor, the publisher of Keats, writing on 18 March 1822, said that 'of Keats's Poems there have never yet been 500 sold', and it was possible for Robert Browning's mother—Sir Edmund Gosse tells us—to bring back for her son from Ollier's shop, in 1825, not only all the works of Shelley but three volumes written by a Mr John Keats, recommended to her as being very much in Mr Shelley's spirit. All these books but one were first editions. It was some time, indeed, before Keats and Shelley were adequately appreciated, or turned from hillocks into mountain peaks. The next poets to be so treated were Tennyson and Browning. Hence it became habitual to imagine that between these giants was nothing but a short valley of little account to poetry. That was inaccurate charting. Though Keats and Shelley died too soon, others of the generation lived on to write authentic poetry. These were overshadowed and almost forgotten, a result necessarily occasioned by the absurd habit of lionizing in which English criticism is prone to indulge. Justice has perhaps been done to Hood, though his early work deserves closer study, and to Hartley Coleridge; but until recently Clare, Ebenezer Elliott, Wade, Mangan, Beddoes, and Darley were vaguely labelled minor poets or fallers-short, without any effort being taken, except spasmodically, to ascertain what their worth is. In their lifetime they were little regarded; after death the plaster Colossus that Tennyson became threw a shade over them all. Nevertheless, the period 1822-42 (dates meant only as an indication) can boast other poetry besides that of Tennyson and Browning.

Darley belonged, then, to a generation of poets that continued

to make a braver show than is even now generally realized, though it had suffered outrageously at the hands of fortune. When Darley arrived in London, Byron, as we have said, was the prevailing fashion (the chief influence on the Tennyson of the *Poems by Two Brothers* is that of Byron), Keats and Shelley were 'in the air', though variously estimated. Of the new-comers Clare, sweet singer and observant country cousin, had started on his career of nine days' wonder as 'Mr John Clare the Northamptonshire Peasant' with the successful *Poems Descriptive of Rural Life* (1820) and the *Village Minstrel* (1821); the youthful Beddoes had published in 1821 *The Improvisatore*, a strange medley of mature accomplishment and crude horror which was followed next year by *The Brides' Tragedy*, an achievement of note; the Corn Law Rhymers, Elliott (an older man), had not yet found himself in the horrific *Night* (1818) and the mixed satiric-narrative-lyric *Peter Faultless to his Brother Simon, Tales of Night and Other Poems* (1820), though these contain evidences of power; Hood's *Lycus the Centaur* belongs to 1822, the disregarded *Joseph and his Brethren* of Charles Jeremiah Wells to 1824, and Thomas Wade's long first book *Tasso and the Sisters and Other Poems* to 1825; R. S. Hawker published his first bad book, *Tendrils*, by Reuben, in 1821. Most of the over-sweet work of Barry Cornwall (Bryan Waller Procter), perhaps the most immediately popular of the new poets, appeared between 1819 and 1823. Lesser names might be multiplied. The majority of the writers referred to met with little or tardy recognition. The reading public of the day was perhaps more indifferent to poetry than is usual, though the complaint is made of too many periods to be of much account. Naturally enough sleek sentimentality had the greatest vogue. The now unreadable magazine verse, the insipidities of L. E. L. (of Jerdan's *Literary Gazette*), and the sadly faded work of Felicia Hemans were high in popular favour. The reign of the *Annals* was about to begin. But poetry continued to be written, under difficulties, even if it was little read. It is interesting to note that the main influence on the earlier work of Beddoes and Wade, as on the *Pauline* of Browning, is that of Shelley. Hazlitt, de Quincey, Lamb, the prose-writers, essayists, and journalists, need not be mentioned here. Some of them will be encountered later. It would be idle to analyse the condition of England at this time as a necessary background to Darley's poetry, for he was neither a Shelley nor a Tennyson, but a solitary from another country who found his

material not in external conditions or current thought, but in communing with his own troubled spirit. As a poet he remains completely withdrawn from contemporary politics, and burns with no zeal to further by his work democratic aspirations. On such things he does not wish to express any opinion, nor is it clear that he was interested in them, beyond a wish to further the general good. His concern is literature and his temper aristocratic. His judgement of his age, in the provinces of literature and art, is clearly expressed in his journalism. In poetry he was not easily moved to admiration; his delight rested fully on Shakespeare and Milton alone.

In April 1822 the Whittakers published his first book, *The Errors of Ecstase A Dramatic Poem with Other Pieces*,¹ inscribed, 'according to promise', to Mrs. N. Colthurst, who remains a name only. Darley was at this time in his twenty-seventh year, so that

¹ The first work by Darley that we have been able to find is the poem 'To Helene: On a gifte-ringe carelesslie loste', dated A D 1672, signed 'Guillame', printed in the *London Magazine* for March 1821, written throughout in the pseudo-archaic spelling often affected by him, and first reprinted by Canon Livingstone in the Memorial volume of 1890. It is not in the poet's MS. 'Lennuma Laborum', but Canon Livingstone had authority for printing it, and internal evidence is convincingly in favour of Darley as the author. In the *London Magazine* for January 1821, however, is a poem 'With a Lampe for Mie Ladie Faire The Spirite of the Lampe—loquitur', signed MAISON, which seems to be Darley's. In movement and epithet it has every mark of his work, and may be compared with the acknowledged 'Beautie's Triomphe' printed in the *Athenaeum* of 8 October 1836, and signed G. D. Here is the first stanza

Ladie! in the silente houre,
Whenere the dewe is onne the flowere,
And the Eveninge's coronette
In the purplinge waues is wette
Ande the little starres doe sleepe,
Like shippes becalmed, alonge the deepe
Thenne,—the Spirite of the Lampe,—
I quitte in joye mie heauenly campe,
On silverie winges of Moonbeames ride,
And bende at mie sweete Ladie's side

Other later lines and phrases make the assumption even more certain. These poems were probably not reprinted in the *Errors of Ecstase* because they were, in a sense, experiments and differed from the general spirit of the book. Darley was an adept at mystification by pseudonym. In the *Literary Gazette* of 26 January 1822 is a poem 'To a Stream', and in the number for 9 March 'Thou hast slept, O lyre!' and two epigrams, one not reprinted, which appear later in *The Errors of Ecstase*. The first two are signed 'Richard Belvoir'. Such devices, or the absence of signatures, make the identification of the poet's occasional work difficult. A few other poems, signed 'D', are to be found in *The Literary Chronicle* and *Weekly Review* towards the end of 1822 and the beginning of 1823. Probably the dates of publication of these poems have no bearing on the time of the poet's arrival in London.

the volume cannot be regarded as a youthful escapade, though some of the verses in it evidently date from earlier years. The preface has never been reprinted. It is a singularly sensible piece of prose, characteristic of the author's independent attitude through life. He realized that poetry must bear its own recommendation, and if it is not intrinsically good, 'no local or otherwise relative circumstances can possibly avail it'. He claims judgement, not indulgence; and though doubtful of the result avows that fame tempts him. 'I tremble whilst I turn to the star which attracts me, but though I tremble, I still turn.'

A similar attitude, more than a little self-conscious, but pleasantly youthful, is revealed in a letter,¹ dated 27 March 1822, to the editor of the *Literary Gazette*, which must have provoked a smile from Jerdan.

Sir, I take the liberty of presenting you with a copy of *The Errors of Ecstasie*, which my friend M. Lubé was so kind as to recommend to your notice. Let me beg, however, that this act of friendship upon his part, may not interfere with the most rigorous impartiality upon yours. Not that I suppose any recommendation could induce you to praise where you should censure, but you might think, perhaps, it was a duty of friendship towards M. Lubé to *withhold* censure tho' it were strictly due. Even this indulgence, I by no means wish for or expect. A judicious and impartial review of a Work of merit, is its best introduction to the Public, in recommending my Poem to you for *this* favor, really consists the service for which I am indebted to M. Lubé, the Work itself must decide if a Review be merited.

I look with some anxiety to your determination upon this subject, as the critical opinion which may be passed upon my Work, will, either by its unfavorableness deter me from pursuing an unattainable object, or by its favorableness encourage and instruct me to that end.

The *Other Pieces* in this book so straightforwardly introduced are of small account. They are chiefly remarkable for their graceful musical rhythms, and the evident influence of the Irish melodist, Thomas Moore. They deal in love and wine, roses and lilies, lyres, running streams, fairies and many a fanciful conceit, conventionally poetical subjects woven with a poetic vocabulary into a pretty, tripping verse. They are the first effort at flight of a young and ardent mind that would fain escape and has not yet questioned whither. The singing note predominates, and several

¹ The Bodleian MS Montagu d. 4. Original letters collected by William Upcott of the London Institution, *Living Poets*, vol. 1, 1824.

of the stanzaic forms are notable anticipations of others to come. Sometimes the faint musical note pleases.

Come, and see!
 How the sleepy willows look
 With their heads laid i' the stream,
 Where silver minnows gleam,
 Rowing up and down the brook;
 Where the dank reed, river-born,
 Blows its melancholy horn
 To the whimperin' waves a-creeping,
 And be-words their woe, with weeping
 'Come, and see!
 Prithee, come, and see!'

Sometimes it is a personal twist given to a stanza that bids pause. One piece, *The Bee*, addressed 'To Mrs. —', may perhaps be read as the allegory of a youthful attachment, the tale of a student neglectful of the sweet joys of life who is summoned to pleasure only to be dismissed to his cell unsatisfied. The same Lady, 'found faithless', is condemned with a romantic gesture to a con-dign punishment by her escaped lover. Not for him tears,

But thou shalt weep, and thou shalt sigh,
 And thou shalt live to wish to die,
 And die to live in Hell!

In these *Other Pieces*, bad and mediocre alike, the Darley note is faintly sounded; they are recognizable as his work, partly because certain words are present already of which he was overfond.

The Errors of Ecstasie itself is of more moment. The setting for this dialogue between a Mystic and the Moon—'A Woodland by Moonlight: a distant bell sounds, and ceases'—is fervently romantic, though the Gothic ruins which would lately have been a necessary part of such a landscape have mercifully disappeared. Shelley counts for something in the poem as a whole. The Mystic first indulges in a long monologue on the ethics of suicide. In the debate that follows he represents the joys and pains of ecstasy, a vague state which Darley seems to think is the peculiar property of poets, whereas the Moon is a prim lady of extreme common sense who preaches a doctrine of moderation. (It will be seen later that though Darley denies genius to women he allows them to be pre-eminent in common sense.) Rarely has the Moon been cast for a more thankless part than that of advocate for the world's opinion. The metaphysics of the poem are often 'young', con-

fused, and smile-provoking, but they represent a personal search, an endeavour to state individual difficulties encountered. Though tinged with a romantic and self-pitying sensibility, they are at times touched to emotion. It is his own problem that the poet states, one to which he returns in *Nepenthe*.

At the opening of the poem the Mystic comes to a breathless and serene silence.

The sullen acclamation of the time
Yon Moon ascended to her midnight throne,
Hath died upon the gentle pulse of night;
And borne amid the thronging courts of Heav'n,
Where lessening stars grow pale before the Queen,
Their saffron cheeks turn'd to cinereous white,
She rules supreme o'er all their singular fires
High and sublime the radiant Empress treads
Her nightly bourne With step too light to print
The starry wilderness, and far too soft
To wake rude clamour i' the tender air
Impress'd, she fleets in silent glory on,
Whilst the mute Heav'ns are hush'd beneath her foot,
And drowsy earth fore-plays the final doom.

No forest nods,
Nor flower winks at the moon; but cold and still,
The slumb'rous landscape, shrouded in the pale
And sheeted volume, sinks in visible death
Through dusky glens now peeps the zenith Queen,
Raining her light upon the glittering turf;
White hoods are thick upon the dale, the fir
Lights all its prickly spires, and the tall reeds,
Sharpen'd with visionary cusps of steel,
In scatter'd groups, gleam down the silver vales.

She walks beneath the sublime arch o' the world,
In calm, and bright, and deep serenity.

In this tranquil silence the Mystic invites his soul to taste, in anticipation, the joy of oblivion. Sleep is mental annihilation as is death, and death an everlasting dark, gained by a little step 'and shrewd addition of the coffin-sheet' for which all passions may be exchanged. This were an easy way to cheat Melancholy, Despair, and Poverty if there were no God, but all things declare that He exists. Are men lords of their own lives or debtors to His Will? Is futurity a dream only or the prescience of a truth? Here

is the Mystic's hinge of doubt. Since eternity is an attribute of God alone, how shall man, then, be immortal? These imaginings, he finds, make chaos. Why should he exist at all if Charity disregards him?

If Heav'n has let me down the winds of Chance,
The rack and light leaf of its termagant blasts . . .

From all such discouraging thoughts he takes refuge in a state of dream.

I seem like one lost in a deep blue sea,
Down, down beneath the billows many a mile,
Where nought of their loud eloquence is heard,
Save a dead murmur of the rushing waves
Fleeting above, more silent than no sound
Over my head, as high as to the moon,
The tall, insuperable waters rise,
Pure and translucent; through whose total depth
The imminent stars shoot unrefracted rays,
And whiten all the bottom of the flood.
The sea-bed hath a scenery of its own,
And nought less wondrous than the realms of air
Hills, dells, rocks, groves, sea-flow'rs, and sedgy caves,
In crystal armour lock'd—scatter'd around!
Here, like a mortal tenant of the sea,
Or fabulous merman, hermit o' the wave,
I stand, the sad surveyor of the scene,
Alone, amid the deserts of the deep.—

The sadness of the nightingale's singing awakens him. He turns to the Moon who bids him listen, and tell what he does there, by night. Has she no sorrow for a world most miserable, he cries? Yes, she has seen exiled lovers and many another sad sight, but his woes are of his own making. He follows vain, seductive meditation. That is truth, he says; he has been cursed with a poet's eye and is the fool of sensibility. Must he be dumb, who cannot shut his senses if he would?

What! shall I tell the nightingale, 'Be dumb!
Thou speak'st not sweeter language than the jay,
Or any other ruffian-throated bird
Which strangles sound in noise?'
Shall I apostrophize the busy stream,
That, quarrelling with its testy pebbles, brings
Such liquid modulations out of stones
As might ashame the lutes of seraphim,
With 'Cease, thou babbler' . . .'

The Moon replies that he is lost in a labyrinth of ecstasy, differing scarcely from madness, whereas genius, though exalted, is not so riotously presumptuous; he has transgressed and pays the penalty. Then, murmurs he, if his finer senses must be killed, he would not change his blood's temper to gain a fool's salvation. She chides him gently, telling him that extremes are ever wrong. He is the plaything of passion and therefore miserable. Yet let him take comfort, for though he is mistaken Heaven will not desert him.

Didst thou not quit,
Most rash, most unadvised, and most vain,
No proferable cause asserted why,
The track which sober Wisdom pointed out,
And plain Experience 'stablish'd as the true,
Th' ascent to riches, happiness, and fame,
Didst thou not barter Science for a song?
Thy gown of Learning for a sorry mantle?
The student's quiet for the city's din?
At once—thy social duty, to assist,
By rational pursuits, the common good,
Bound in thine own—for selfish Fantasie
Useless to others, fatal to thyself?

You left Philosophy i' the mire, dismiss'd
Prudence, to keep companions with the dull;
Leagued with Ambition, Poetry, and Pain;
Chose Misery out of hell, and call'd him Brother

He knows this to be truth.

I grew weary of the dull,
Undeviating, dusty road of Science,
Vacant o' beauty, barren o' sweetness, . . .

He thought to find his happiness elsewhere, among the dear creations of his brain, but reality comes to scatter the lovely dream.

The Errors of Ecstasie was probably written after Darley had realized that a fellowship at Trinity College was not for him; not long, that is, before publication. It shows a mind in doubt, uncertain of its powers, too considerate of the many sides of the question; a mind that if it dares to fly will dare self-consciously. Were his qualities as poet great enough to justify him in devoting his life to poetry?—that is the question which the puzzled and romantic young man had to solve. A like question was to trouble the more youthful and complex Beddoes, who did not believe his

powers sufficient and found justification in the study of medicine. A generation before, Humphry Davy, most promising of young men, forsook poetry for science. Darley hesitates, though it is easy to see which way inclination lies. Moreover, the doubt was never dismissed, but recurred again and again. His mathematical books were probably attempts to satisfy 'social duty', the demon that demanded something whose usefulness could be measured at once.

It would be easy to pick out the many faults in this poem, such as the poverty of the dialogue, the melodramatic romance, the echoes of other poets, and the provoking neologisms and archaic words (indulcedinous, impercipient, impartible, seductive, deceptible, and the like) which Darley scatters with a full hand. These things do not destroy the striking promise of the whole. At its best the blank verse is quiet, unrhetical, musical. It has character, though that distinguishing quality is not strongly marked. The epithet often carries undue weight, yet the poet is one who knows the value of words. It was no little thing for a young poet to be able to sound his own grave melody on muted strings in an age which could offer models in blank verse so various as those of Wordsworth, Byron, Keats, and Shelley.

The book gained little immediate notice from the critics. *The Literary Chronicle* for 6 April 1822 contained a favourable review of more than a page, but most of the space was devoted to quotation from *The Errors of Ecstasie*, a 'very superior poem' that 'will rank high among the productions of the day'. Not till December 1824, when Darley had become a valued contributor to the *London Magazine*, did official recognition come in the shape of a long review in that periodical. It is unsigned, and runs to five and a half pages of double columns, much of which is quotation; Procter, possibly, had a hand in its appearance, though the writing is too vigorous to be his. The author is mildly reproved for certain errors of youth, Hibernicisms, and the mixture of metaphysics and poetry (only combined with advantage by Mr. Coleridge); but he is singled out as one of the most promising poets of the day.

'Those who are susceptible of like trains of thought, those who are familiar with the usages of poetry and tired of its common-places, who would be ready to apprehend at a glance a novel image, or a delicate peculiarity of expression, could not fail to perceive that the work is remarkable. There are passages in it, which, were they to be quoted as belonging to some poet of acknowledged pre-eminence, would not be considered as insufficient titles to his place.'

The poet is contrasted with certain violently censured *minora sidera* 'who have prided themselves on the weaknesses of their nature as composing the poetical temperament'. The praise bestowed is discriminating. Not many first poems could sustain so elaborate an inquisition after two years' interval. It was after reading the copious extracts in this article that Beddoes, a severe judge of contemporary work, wrote to Kelsall in praise of Darley's 'first English product'. Nevertheless, the book did not sell, and no second edition was ever required. In 1825 the author could still ask for half a dozen copies.

Four long letters from Darley to Miss Neal (an intimate family friend), ranging from September 1822 to April 1823, throw considerable light on his nature and the circumstances of his early life in London. They show him in solitude, almost despondent of making a literary career; and they bear eloquent testimony to his gratitude for an intelligent friend who would respond to confidences that eased his mind. It was a relief to him to talk on paper. If, at times, he is conscious of talking rather well, that was but natural to a candidate for fame who wanted to justify himself and make a good impression. A note of affectionate banter runs through the letters that might perhaps, in propitious circumstances, have ripened into something deeper

(To Miss Neal)

London (35 Arundel St Strand)
Sept 20th, 1822

My dear Marianne,

Most unexpectedly I had a visit from George [her brother] two days since. It is needless for me to tell you what pleasure this afforded me—to see a friend from the land of my friends. He was so kind as to sit with me most part of the day, as I was confined to the house by a strained ancle. From ten, till five in the afternoon we chatted without intermission, & I assure you since my having left Ireland I have not enjoyed a happier day—we purpose renewing our confabulation & my gratification tomorrow, which I expect with impatience. Our conversation you may easily guess turned upon family topics—when I say 'family' I certainly mean to include you—& yours—we are now so long intimate, that our friendship has almost taken the hue of consanguinity. My solitude, for I am in solitude, 'alone amongst a million', was most gratefully interrupted—and indeed I might say, yesterday was the only happy day I have seen in England. All my feelings were awakened, & I felt an interest to which my heart has long been a stranger, while we dwelled on things long past but not forgotten, & on subjects so closely interwoven with our heart-strings, as the state & circumstances of our families and

friends Distant as it is my fate to be from the home of my affections, the interval has not been sufficient to break the ties of family-union & friendship which bind me to my native land Tho not to my knowledge in love, surely I have left my heart among you—my thoughts involuntarily stray to home whenever I permit myself the luxury of meditation—a species of inactive reflection in which I am much too apt to indulge You will say, why not return? Alas my dear girl, I wish I could—the bosom of my family is the bed I would wish to die in, and the friends I have deserted are the dearest I shall ever know But what should I do in Ireland? I could never obtain a fellowship—my health, my talents, my industry, my disposition, are either unequal or unsuitable to the attempt—the misfortune which clogs my utterance is in itself an insuperable obstacle—Then what should I do in Ireland? Why, degenerate into one of those nameless characters, one of those useless appendages to the living world, who walk about in a threadbar[e] coat & a slouched hat, with nothing but their insignificance to secure them from the attempts of malice & nothing but their silence to recommend them to the toleration of society—a poor recommendation & a contemptible security. Tho ambitious more of peace than of fame, of independence than of wealth, I am too little of a philosopher to be satisfied with tranquillity which is to be purchased by insignificance, or competence unaccompanied by some degree of reputation. The profession of an author is somewhat less disreputable than the empty vocation of a ‘Walking Shadow’ such as I have described—& this explains why I am in London, tho I fear my pursuit of literary reputation has been more anxious than successful.

[After expressing his warm delight at the news that he may escort her through London next year, he proceeds abruptly]

The first recommendation to my good opinion is an extravagant adoration, an *insane* admiration of Shakespeare There is no author more rich in imperfections, or better supplied with defects—indeed there is no established work which contains so much *bad writing* as might be selected from the Dramas of Shakespeare—& this, paradoxical as the assertion may seem, is the best proof of his genius. What must the energy of that mind be, which can indulge in the very wantonness of negligence, & yet force a higher interest in our hearts, than the most uniform exertions of others can attain?

The second recommendation to my favor, is an immoderate preference for Hamlet. I am not quite sure that Hamlet is a *lady's* play—Othello is a more domestic tragedy, and involves the most interesting subject of a womans thoughts, Marriage-life But nevertheless, we are to distinguish between the merits belonging to the *story* itself which an author undertakes to relate, & those merits which he displays in the relation. . . .

George tells me you are become a mere bookworm—but that I know your taste does not lie in the shelves of a Circulating Library, I should

tremble for the color of your hose—History is too profound a study to affect anything but the head. History, that is, not a mere roll of great names, or a catalogue of facts and occurrences, but a philosophical survey of Human Nature as exemplified by the conduct of any particular nation or nations, is to me a most interesting department of Polite Literature. I would above all things wish to abuse you for some ill-chosen study or mistaken literary favoritism, but your tastes coincide so exactly with my own, that I cannot do so either with justice or policy. What histories do you read? & which historian do you prefer? A lady who shall be nameless professed to me her admiration of Shakespeare, but declined studying him, because the rogue sometimes speaks a little less religiously prudish than ‘a nun of Winter’s Sisterhood’—just as if the woman couldn’t read Shakespeare as well as Solomons Song or equally exceptionable parts of the Old Testament—just as if she couldn’t dare to kick an orange for fear of soiling her petticoat—I hope the same judicious spirit will not determine you to neglect reading Gibbon’s Decline & Fall—your piety must be of a similar timidity with the above-mentioned lady’s morality, & as little to be admired, if you except that elegant & learned author from the list of your favorite historians

[A ‘little folly’ follows. Why is it that she and others are still unmarried?]

Perhaps you are like myself, not easily to be satisfied in your choice of a partner for life—tho I fancy there the similitude ends—for I swear the woman whom I could love, would never return the compliment. Indeed it is superfluous to introduce my own name upon the occasion, for I have long accustomed myself to consider Marriage as a state of life for which I was never intended—tho I confess (which may perhaps surprise you) that I have always regretted the circumstance which excludes me from the charms of happiness which I might otherwise derive from an union with one whom I could love & esteem, one of a kindred disposition and spirit to my own—under the disguise of stoicism and philosophy, you would scarcely expect to lurk a weakness of the heart which could make me the very fool of domestic affections—even my own family think superficially upon this part of my disposition. But I am in the pulpit again—this marriage is a grave text.

When will you write to me? I shall expect your answer to the many queries I have proposed in this scrawl, by return of post. But I have two or three cautions to give you. First: dont be too sentimental—I hate sentiment as cordially as Sir Peter Teazle (at the end of the play). Second: if you love me write a little folly—nonsense & namby-pamby—I doat upon everything which smacks of the fireside, tea-table, chit-chat, & petticoatism. Third: be sure you make two or three grammatical errors, ’twouldn’t be amiss if you were to spell a few words rong. In fine, write your first thoughts in the first words of the first mode of spelling, which comes into your head—as I do. If a bright thought, or

a deep reflection, comes—well & good—if the star of poetry predominates—let it shine out—if the fury of inspiration seizes your mind give it birth in a tempest of sublimity—if you are possessed of a rhyming devil, let him ooze out at the nib of your pen—’tis better he without, than thee within’—but if the Genius of Folly pinches your right elbow, scratch his effigy on the paper—caricature the knave in a dozen lines of pothooks & hangers for his sauciness—& if he doesn’t quit tenure, he’s a sturdier lover of the sex than I thought for.

You have commission’d George to bring you over some of my ephemeral productions. Such of them as were procurable, & which I thought less indifferent than the rest, I put him in the way of obtaining—they are really not worth the purchase or carriage, but they may serve to allay your curiosity. I have done nothing considerable in the Literary way—want of funds, of introductions, of speech & address, of worldly knowledge & dexterity—of (last but not least) *brains*, has kept me & will keep me, a *poor* author—in faculties, appearance, & life. I am the living personification of those ridiculous characters which people the works of the novelist & satyrst, those ludicrous yet melancholy pictures of literary obscurity which you have so often contemplated with an alternate inclination to pity, laughter & contempt. ‘Tell it not in Gath’, I have found out a secret here, which would astonish the echoes of the family mansion were it noised in their vicinity—I am not a *genius*. No, nor a poet, which is a lower step in the ladder of intellectuality—‘think of that Master Brooke, only think of that’. I confide this secret to you first because you are a woman—and secondly because you are one in whose affections the confession will not injure me, tho it may in your respect. Keep my secret however, as close as you would a sigh for the youth of your heart—lock it up, as you’d put his love-letter under your boddice—for if it once gets abroad into the atmosphere, tho I sing like a dying swan no one would hear me.

Give my love to your dear & amiable mother—whom I will not say how much I esteem—I have an equal dislike to tell favorable truth, & flattering falsehood.

You will not be able to develope this scrawl—which I am glad of, as it will keep you longer in my company—the endeavour to decypher it I shall measure your affection for me by the length & *soonness* of your answer; but according to the above principle (indeed for want of room also) I will not tell you the extent of mine for you.

Yours,

George Darley.

The tale of loneliness and failure is continued in the next letter, where the fate of the ‘Errors of Ecstasie’ is mentioned and his interest in the drama made plain. Also it would seem from the postscript that the friendship is becoming closer.

(To Miss Neail.)

London October 24th, 1822.
35 Arundel St. Strand

My dear Marian,

So shall I always address you—Marianne is by much too commonplace, & I am more a slave to mere names than a sempstress who condemns at first sight the novel whose hero or heroine is not of the race of Beverleys or Emmelines. In obedience to custom, I acknowledge to have received a letter from you, dated September (with your sex's usual accuracy) This was little less grateful than if you had sent me your picture—it was the picture of your thoughts, which are not the least valuable of your additions Mark· this is not flattery—I do not pronounce any of your attributes to be *positively* worthy of admiration—I merely say, that your mental qualities are *not inferior* to your personal—and no entreaties can extract from me, a more precise declaration of my sentiments respecting either. I am always quarrelling with the good people of Darley House about not writing to me—saying that letters are the least proof of affection—the defendants agree that affection is to be measured by thoughts, not letters—to which I the plaintiff answer, that written words will burst forth from the pen, as naturally as spoken words from the mouth, where the thoughts are frequent & intense; and as towards those we love, we are apt to express it by spoken words in their presence (conveying if not love, at least attention), so will we express it in their absence by written words, i.e. Letters. There are other numberless excuses also about the scarcity of pens, ink, paper, wafers, franks, time, etc etc, which the defendants adduce, all of which are very ingenious, but of little weight with one of my jealous disposition In fact, tho I am no advocate for a regular mercantile account of letters written & received, I cannot but regard silence as a proof that impressions are faint, & frequent correspondence as some indication of remembrance being preserved by the writer. A letter from Ireland, by a very plain & natural figure, stands me in stead of society—I have neither inclination nor power to cultivate acquaintances here—and your packet, read over by my solitary fire, conjured up a kind of mental shade, which sat in the opposite nook, and shortened the October night by its imaginary conversation You see by this what a benefactor you may be to me, without any pecuniary expence, except as far as a few sheets of paper may involve you—so I expect you will indulge me pretty frequently by your secondhand society, by a quick succession of letters. I may be able also perhaps to afford you some little information upon subjects with which I am accidentally more conversant, & on the whole I think such a correspondence would be more beneficial than useless, to us both

As a proof of the value which you ought to set upon epistolary communication with me, I must inform you that in all my attempts to forward my *own* interests by my writings, I have been uniformly unsuccessful. I have lost instead of gained, absolutely lost in hard money,

five and thirty pounds sterling by the Errors of Ecstasie But this is not all the fruits of my Errors & my Ecstasies I had such unhappy felicity in depicting an insane Poet, that I really have not the face to offer another work to a Publisher—my own character has been confounded with that of the mad Poet, & half the town is convinced I am *crazed* Vitally as this supposition affects my interests, I really cannot help laughing when I think of its prevalence against me—to be condemned to the very situation which I had so frequently enjoyed in description—to be identified with the crackbrained Tragedists & distressed Authors of Fielding and Smollet[t]—is so ridiculous & comical, that with all its accompanying inconvenience, I find myself irresistibly excited to laugh at the predicament into which Poetry has conducted me Added to the above failure, I have offered half a dozen papers to different periodical publications, *everyone* of which has been refused—& as misfortunes do not come single,—No more, you shall hear no more but this, when you come to England next Spring expect to see a genuine Son of the Muses.

[He tells her of his pleasure in her letter though it was not long enough—‘I put tenfold its quantity into a less space by means of this graphic zigzaggery of mine’—and refers to his stammer: then]

In my mind, it is equal to half an hour in paradise, to quarrel with a Lady—to see her anxiety, & her pertinacity, & her anger, & her pride, & all her pretty passions, intersecting each other. Your critical remarks afford me an impassable opportunity for this gratification, & if we dont quarrel, it shan’t be the fault of my poetship. Pour l’attaque I knew you were ‘wavering in your preference of Hamlet to Othello’ which in plain talk is that you preferred Othello. I knew also that Young would be the God of your Idolatry—he is just a lady’s tragedian, which (asking your pardon) is the most unfortunate recommendation any man was ever cursed with, in points of intellectuality There is some excuse however for you, as you’ve never seen Kean Young’s Othello is a maudlin piece of work—very sweet & pretty & elegant & all that, but the man can’t *feel* the character. Not that I applaud rant & bombast & bloodshed & battery—this is the opposite extreme. But Young is a mere declaimer—or rather the echo of a declaimer—for he professes to imitate Kemble; all of whose attributes he reaches but his energy. Kean is not an orator, he feels too intensely—he is all ardor, passion, vehemence, enthusiasm, with more capability of expressing tender & pathetic feelings than any tragedian male or female I have ever seen—indeed I think he excells in pathos. But he has not that flowing eloquence, that rolling volubility which delights the petticoat part of an audience, and which Young is too happy in. In short, I am positive you would still prefer Young, tho Kean were to outdo himself—and on this I can only say, your sex is in fault, tis pity you’re a woman. I have the inexpressible

pleasure of differing with you wholly as to Young's 'just conception of Shakespeare's meanings', his new lights in the illustration of that author's sentiments—I think he seldom deviates from the established readings without plunging into error & misconception. You have heard I dare say of the three characteristic readings of that sentiment in *Hamlet*.—

He was a man, Horatio, take him for all in all,
I neer shall look upon his like again.

(This is Kemble's, & in my opinion the natural sense of the lines)

He was a *man*, Horatio —take him for all in all,
I neer shall look upon his like again

(This is Kean's, & has his peculiar characteristic of catching at energetical *points*)

He was a man, Horatio, take him for all in all:—
I neer shall look upon his like again

(This is said to be Young's, & I confess myself wholly unable to appreciate its judiciousness. It conveys nothing but that Hamlet's father was a rational two-legged animal, called a man, of which no one had expressed any doubt. It has not Kean's idea of the unlimited perfection of manhood, nor Kemble's (or rather Shakespeare's) idea of manhood as perfect as human frailty would allow.)

[After a discussion of Gertrude's guilt in *Hamlet*]

My opinion of Burns is, that he wrote a great many good & a great many bad things—his Mary in Heaven, is heavenly. Byron is a fine poet, but too little of a philosopher—his commerce is all with the imagination, the feelings, and the senses; never with the reason—compare him in this respect with Shakespeare and Milton—he is master of but one passion, gloomy vindictiveness—his Love is always tinged with sensuality—he is more wordy than eloquent, and his verse is often mere prose. But he is a *lady's* poet—all romance, & heroism, & elopement, & love, & death, & sentiment, & *all that*. After the above learned disquisition I have little room for chit-chat, beyond what is contained in the first part of my letter. You say nothing of your matrimonial intentions in your epistle tho I profess myself a willing confidant. . . .

I have good hopes of William—he is a sensible young man, & I believe attentive to his profession—with a good person & gentlemanly address, & a heart not *too* susceptible, I think he will be ultimately successful—the study is also admirably suited to his inclination and abilities. Charles's selection of vocation is not judicious. Henry got a much better place at entrance than I expected—domestic education is seldom efficient.¹

And now my fair correspondent, my 'bright communicant',² I think it is almost time that I should subscribe myself your affectionate. Let me have an answer to this quizzical epistle, full of ire and indignation

¹ His brothers.

² A phrase from *The Errors of Ecstasie*

at my treatment of your sex and yourself. One would think from all this folly, that I am on the point of preferment, yet I am really the most miserable of beings, but it is the nature of my heart to swell against adversity. My next letter will contain the rope in which I have hung myself.

Your very humble servant,
George Darley.

Give my love to your Mamma and remember me to George.

I forgot to abuse you for your preference of Francis to Charles—this is another exhibition of lady's judgment—there is, if you will, a great superiority in point of gallantry, generosity, chivalry, etc. on the part of the French king—but the Emperor far excelled him in mental qualities. Francis is a complete lady's hero, but he was a weak prince. Read Schiller's *Thirty Years War*—it is quite of the species which would amuse you—Wallenstein is an amiable creature, & Tili a charming fellow. I suppose you are a proselyte to the German school of Drama, where every thing is so gentle and alluring. What a sweet man is the Robber Moor! 'made to engage all hearts & charm all eyes'. What a pathetic piece of business Adelaide of Walfingen's murder of her children is! I'm sure Titus Andronicus disputes the sway over your heart with Othello. You are such an apostate from your sex's usual proclivity to milk & water—so stern an advocate for the higher passions, such a contemner of Barry Cornwall's Guidos & 'pale girls' & 'beautiful' beauties. We should positively be married, our dispositions are so dissimilar. Lord! what an eternity of contention there would be!

The next two letters are more hopeful, and for the good reason that Darley was now a contributor to the *London Magazine*. The manner of his introduction to this periodical is revealed by John Taylor, one of the proprietors, when writing to his brother at a later date. 'Peter Patricius Pickle-herring' had written a letter to the editor of the magazine, and to this seemingly unimportant act Taylor piously ascribes both his consequent prosperity and the one lasting friendship resulting from his literary ventures. For Pickle-herring was Darley. The story may be followed by means of two entries in that editorial miscellany of the *London Magazine* called *The Lion's Head*. In the issue for October 1822 is the following paragraph (it would be interesting to know what were the *Adventures* mentioned):

'Peter Patricius Pickle-herring has displayed considerable ability, and no little impudence, in his Vituperation. It far exceeds in merit his "Adventures" they are *inadmissible*. If Peter had a little more refinement, he would become, probably, a welcome Correspondent.'

The next entry, in January 1823, must have gladdened Darley's heart:

'Peter Patricius Pickleherring is a fish rather to our taste. We *did* think well of the last paper we received—and we *do* think well of the present one. If P. P. P. will favour our Publishers with a call, and introduce himself (we know no other way), they will make his mind easy on the subject to which he alludes in his letter.'

The two letters that follow should be kept, in strict chronology, till the next chapter, but it seems more appropriate to give them here. The gain in confidence is at once apparent. The subject of Darley's critical work for the *London*, particularly his recommendation of 'The Brides' Tragedy' by Beddoes, is reflected in these letters.

(To Miss Neail.)

London. 35 Arundel St Strand
January 30th, 1823

My dear Marian,

You and I, it is plain, are to keep debtor & creditor account of letters given and received. Why, when you found I did not answer your last, could you not write me another? You have nothing to do—I have. So little brains has God spared me, that when engaged in any work however trifling, I cannot afford half an hour to scribble a letter. I have been this month earning five guineas from a Magazine, tho' I would not interrupt myself for the pleasure of writing even to you. I construct a sentence—then trim it—then puff it out—then transmography it *de tout*—then spoil it—then imprecate it for half an hour—scratch my poll—devour my pen—and at the end of half a day, eke out *three lines*. Then I sit down and dream—Play some wild gambol or other—Read for refreshment—but avoid penmanship as I would a hot poker, till the next day. Thus, till I have finished the affair under my hand, I can do almost nothing else. I have now only just got free. Troth, authorship is almost as wearisome as fellowship. Indolence is the bane of my life—I hate a regular execution of mind, & wonder how I ever succeeded even as I did in College. You may perceive symptoms of this disease in my letters—incoherency and inconsistency etc etc

What upon earth I've done to the people at Darley House I can't imagine—I never hear from them—or if I do, it is half a sheet written wide & eked out by a headache or some such excuse. For my part I've determined to keep up the farce no longer, but to pay them in kind—by silence. I am quite at a loss to know on what grounds you 'applaud their not trusting anything to the glance of my eagle eye' as you are pleased to say. What are they afraid of? Sure I am not going to write a Critique on their epistles. My own are too open to criticism—I never wrote a letter yet without a dozen mistakes in it—those two which you

have of mine, contain numberless errors in sense, grammar, etc. If they can't bear any of their favorite opinions or designs to be controverted, that indeed is another matter, but I think they should have some very cogent reason to support them in their conduct. But this is futile—I have been threatening of late to return, & in that event I could exact a personal apology from the whole clan. My reason for returning is this—I can make nothing of Authorship, and really my poetical establishment is too slender to compensate for almost total solitude.

Why do I write to you, now? I'll tell you—from a love of prate. Beside, you know if I should return I am little better than a walking statue. Also, I have a crow to pluck with your spinstership.

Firstly of the first—your last letter was quite in a passion—this was 'beautiful'. You are anger'd by my opinion of the mental faculties of your sex—you accuse me of joining in the common opinion of female imbecility of understanding. Now, my shoestring to your garter, that I have a better opinion of the sex, than you. True, I deny them, what we call by the name genius—not that many women have not a just claim to this—but it no more belongs to the sex than courage does. In support of this assertion, it might be enough to allege (what you seem to make but little of, viz) Common Opinion. On matters of fact, such as this, Common Opinion is the best of all arguments—the World may be led blindly into an abstruse theory however erroneous, because its difficulty surpasses the ordinary discriminative powers of the multitude—but the world's opinion on such a subject as Female Intellect must be right, for it is the result of long experience on a matter of which even the meanest person is a competent judge. Again In Human Biography, instance me one Woman for one hundred (I might say, one thousand) Men of Genius. You will say, Education depresses the sex. But why do we never meet a Burns or a Bloomfield or a Hogg or a Clare, in the form of a Woman? Here were men of less education than many many women, yet there is no woman in the Annals of Biography who can be opposed to them (in their lines). Thirdly & lastly. I think it manifest from the constitution of the sex, that they were not intended to excel in the higher departments of Intellect. Softness, timidity, devotion to the gentler affections, are the characteristics of the sex—Women avoid, dislike, or scarcely tolerate the exhibitions or developments of the Terrible Passions—Energetical delineations of Fury, Hatred, Revenge, etc. overpower their feelings & are repulsive to their natures. This is an evident piece of fact. What is the conclusion to be drawn from it? Why that Women cannot succeed in portraying or delineating passions which they fly from—which they have no pleasure in contemplating—which terrify them instead of exciting them. Young, when he drew the character of Zanga,¹

¹ From *The Revenge*, a tragedy, by Dr Edward Young. First acted at Drury Lane in 1721. Hazlitt wrote a criticism of Maywood's Zanga for *The Times* of 3 October 1817.

had an internal satisfaction in developing the passion of Revenge, tho he might condemn it—as Shakespeare had in Murder when he wrote Macbeth—I think you must allow that Women seldom delight in such delineations But these Terrible Passions are the great, the principal instruments, or materials rather, which Genius employs Hence, it follows, that Women have not genius. I mean, generally. Seriously & without sophistry, I think you must agree with me in the above

But tho I deny genius to the sex, I think on the other hand, that if the effect of Education & Circumstances of Life, be taken into account, that on an average the superiority in point of what is called Sense must be conceded to Women. Wisdom is perhaps too high and masculine a species of Sense to be consistent with the gentleness of the sex, but Common Sense is in my opinion much more usual with women than with men. Tho' we never find a country maiden start up to a Genius like Burns or Hogg or Tennant, yet while the characteristic of the male peasantry is unthinking stupidity, that of the female is shrewdness, smartness, keen & observing wariness, readiness of reply & active prudence. In the middle & higher ranks, the superiority of the sex in point of Sense is not so apparent, on account of the influence of Education in depressing the one sex & exalting the other—but even in these, I think we must award the palm to Women—on an average. We rarely see a woman who cant say *something*—we frequently see men who literally 'have not a word to throw at a dog' On the whole, tho I disallow the claim of genius on the part of women, (in the department of Literature, I really do not know of *one* unequivocal instance of first-rate Talent) yet in Good Sense I am inclined to place them far above our sex, in general. . . .

'Fire and water will never unite' Upon the subject of Young's acting we are again 'monkey and cat'—I call'd him a 'Disclaimer'—you ask for 'a London definition of the word—for that in Dublin it is an expression rather of praise than censure'—this is exactly what Young's acting deserves '*rather* praise than censure' Disclaimer, however, is I believe generally applied to rhetorical speakers, to those whose chief merit lies in their delivery—whose forte is in their tongue rather than in their mind. Now this I think is peculiarly the case with Young—he is (what no one ever denied) a most chaste, elegant, & 'beautiful' speaker. But something more is required of an actor—his province is to develope feelings, not to deliver orations—this latter belongs to the senate or the pulpit. And it is in this view I regard Young as deficient—he may be a very good speaker, but he is not much of an actor—he may delight the ear, but he does not reach the mind. The mob, women especially, are slaves to their ears—and as long as sense predominates over mind, that is, as long as human creatures are human, the general voice will be in favor of such men as Young . . .

I hope George received his packet safe. I fear it must have suffered

many hardships on the sea Has he determined on the grand affair yet? I am thinking of getting married myself—of entering into that ‘holy state’—that ‘blessed state’—i. e. as soon as I have ‘drawn an angel down’—for anything short of perfection would not suit my deserts I hear a long cousin of mine has lately got himself wived—but who ‘the happy woman’ is, what she is, or where she came from, or anything about her, my communicative family who find such difficulty in filling their letters, never have thought well to inform me. I believe henceforth I must apply to you for all news respecting Ireland & its inhabitants—of my own family I just know they live somewhere between Stephen’s Green & Ball’s Bridge—‘farther saith not’

If you will take my opinion in preference to your own, & the host of Byronians, Southeymians, Cornwallians, etc , etc., whose works I declare I cant read with almost any sensation but that of, phew!—if you will take my word for a work of real genius, there is *one* now abroad A work chock-full of imperfections & gross infractions of good taste and judgment—but yet nearer to Shakespeare (at least in point of imagination) than any work I recollect (of the kind) since his time. The Brides’ Tragedy, by Beddoes—I trust I shall shortly see the downfall of that pitiful, puling, maudlin, degenerate school of drama patronised by that effeminate passionist, Byron—accomplished by this rising star. That Byron and Cornwall are men of genius, no one can doubt—but they are *Italian* geniuses, not sterling British. The only fear I have of the author of the Brides’ Tragedy is, that he is no more than an Imagination There is no attempt at delineation of character in his Tragedy—which you know is Will’s forte & the highest province of the dramatist—but this new author is a *minor*, and if he is not overwhelmed by the present execrable fashion of refining verses to perfect insipidity, which even Byron’s ferocity is not proof against, he may acquire the distinguishing characteristic of the British Dramatists. If he can attain this, ‘let *Otway* look to his laurels’. If you have a few shillings to spare, buy the Brides’ Tragedy immediately. It is worth all the Tragedies Byron ever wrote or ever will write—with mawkish *Mirandola*¹ to boot But you’re a woman—I forgot

Write me a couple of sheets quickly, and talk a good deal of nonsense if you love me. I think I shall not return to Ireland as I threatened. Are you preparing for London? My elbows are out! Love to your mother & remember me to George.

Yours,
G. D.

The next letter is inordinately long, and has been much curtailed. It would fill ten closely printed pages. He talks in it of an engagement to marry the widow, Tragedy, but the wedding

¹ By Barry Cornwall (B W. Procter) The play had a successful run of sixteen nights at Covent Garden in January 1821, with Charles Kemble as Guido

was never celebrated publicly The reference is probably not to a creative work but to his critical articles on modern English dramatists

(To Miss Neail)

[No address.]

(April 12th, 1823)

My dear Marian,

This is Good Friday—all shops shut—so I can get no letter paper—ergo, you must excuse this schoolboy sheet

I have a delightful headache—am thereby disabled from writing sense for the Magazine—ergo, have some leisure for writing nonsense to *you* You see I have not forgotten how to pay lefthanded compliments—‘thou knowest my old ward, Hal’.

[A long piece of nonsense follows, lightly cancelled by Darley; the burden of it is, as he says, ‘when may I expect you in London?']

I was mightily amused by your account of the Row in Dublin—so characteristic at once of the describer and described. By the bye, I can see you are a little of a *policizer*, and think I could tell which colour you fancy, Orange or Green. For my own part, with respect to this question of Emancipation, it is beset with such opposite difficulties, that I am almost at a loss to form any opinion on the subject On the one hand, *Justice* I am obliged to confess, should exonerate the Catholics from many of their grievances, if not from all. for instance, I think it an oppression as absurd as it is violent, to make them in any part support the clergy of another persuasion, etc. But on the other side, no one at all acquainted with the intriguing spirit, the Machiavelian duplicity, and Jesuitical policy of the Romish Church, can deny that in such event, ‘the Church would be in danger’ Thus expediency, is apparently opposed to the Catholic claims. Yet here again it might be observed: that expediency should ever yield to Justice, even on the ground of *expediency* itself—for Injustice, never can be expedient, in the end, though for a time it may quell faction, or crush heterodoxy, or restrain erroneous principles: Truth will at length assert her own Many however will assert that it is not only expedient but *just*, to rule the Catholics with a rod of iron, and on this principle: that though such conduct is productive of evils, viz those suffered by the Catholics, it is yet counter-balanced, nay more, by being effective of a certain good, viz the safety of Protestantism and encouragement of the True Faith: that thus, oppression is merely the result of a very general and indubitable maxim, ‘of two evils, we should choose the least’. On the whole, however, (though I may have the pleasure of disagreeing with you hereupon) I should be for leaving all to the slow march of Truth & Knowledge: emancipate the Catholics though the conversion of Ireland be the consequence, sooner or later, Catholicism, if it be built upon sand, will fall. Yet how I vacillate! can I assert that Truth and Knowledge ever ‘will march’

(as my uncle Toby says), when I reflect that Emancipation may be the very means of putting a stop to their progress, by enlarging the power of Catholicism to advance its favourite principle of Ignorance, to work miracles by sleight of hand, practise on the minds of the illiterate and weak, and finally reduce mankind to that state of ignorance and superstition, where Martin Luther found them three centuries ago. Or is knowledge too far advanced, to submit to such backsliding?

Like the painter who wrote under the portrait of a cock, 'This is a Cock', I must tell you that the preceding paragraph is intended for Wisdom, and as such I expect you will entertain it. Now for a little Insanity.

I am about to be *married*. And to a *Widow*. I have told none of my family (who indeed seem to care little about me), so you need not

Lover's wishes run before their wits, and I may have anticipated what will never happen. Vanity has ever been my foible, and from a few casual civilities, which I have misconstrued into encouragement of my addresses, or from an infatuated prepossession in favor of my own qualifications by which I have converted my fancies into realities and imagined what had no existence, I may be now deceiving both myself and you. But tho' I have many fears, I certainly have some hopes, else I should lose no time with such an illusion, contenting myself with the obscurity which is most suitable to my deficiencies. Being a lady, your first desire will probably be to have a description of the *Lady*. Well then. She is not like Mrs P—, nor the *ci-devant* Miss O—, nor Mrs. B—, nor you. Not like any body, indeed, of our acquaintance. She is of a tall, commanding, and majestic figure—very *English* (if you know that characteristic) i. e. perhaps a little too masculine for some tastes—she is however certainly, I may assert, of a very fine person. Her face partakes much of the character of her figure, but to be a little more minute, she has dark, very dark, hair and eyes—Roman nose, high forehead, good and expressive mouth. Her complexion is *very* pale. The contour of her face fine, but its tout-ensemble melancholy, or rather (allow something to my partiality) *interesting*. To tell you honest truth, I am very much in love with her, and I fear shall be very miserable should I fail of success. She is of a highly respectable family, and of large expectation, if not absolute private fortune. Of her age, you must not enquire. I have made you my confidante thus far, but you must wait with patience for further information, as I am unwilling such an affair should attain publicity, till the eve of the event should it ever take place. I will say no more at present but that she is the widow of a Scottish gentleman of the name of Home (nearly related to the author of 'Douglas'), her maiden name was Trajdie. You cannot of course expect me to speak more openly at present. . . .

Now, to be very dull. I underline the word 'very', as, notwithstanding the liberal intermixture of pertness, my whole letter is probably of the

dull order But I am now to be particularly dull, and having to be particularly dull, what duller subject can I choose than *self* that subject upon which as Doctor Johnson says 'all are fluent, few agreeable'. You desire me to write specifically as to my health Generally speaking, my health is *rather* better than whilst I was reading for a Fellowship The intense application requisite to obtain that distinction in the Dublin University, which even the highest order of mental faculties must compound for, overpowered my fragile constitution; and from a sense of my own stupidity and total inadequacy for the pursuit I was engaged in, I became dispirited, depressed, and unusually nervous. I am now, I think, better Headaches of course, but not so frequent. This is the only real disease to which I am subject, or indeed, which I ever experience. You who know what headaches are, will perhaps say that the mal de tête is a disease quite sufficient for any reasonable person. I do not think so; for as if this *real* disease were not enough, I have contracted an *imaginary* one to fill up the vacuum; I mean, Hypochondriasis. To this I have been subject from infancy, and that austerity, cynicism, and misanthropy, which you must have frequently observed in my manners and conduct, are the offspring of this day night-mare (to speak nationally), the 'brood of *Sorrow*, without father bred' The essence of this malady consists in its having no cause, at least no proportionate cause, to excite it I am not quite sure that it will ever lead me to commit suicide, for the comfort of dying in one's bed is such a luxury, that I am surprised at any person of sense deliberately foregoing it by an act of se offendendo (in Gravedigger's language). It is true, I promised to enclose you the rope in which I had hung myself, and so well I might, for I have an unaccountable prejudice against suspension, which I fear will ever prevent your enjoying the pleasure you expect. The next best approved method of defrauding the Faculty, is that of Drowning but I am so *light*, I fear I should never sink, and then to have one's clothes wet, and no good come of it! You might advise, the tying of a stone round my neck but that would be dying too much in the style of a *blind puppy* Indeed ever since I have read that tremendous scene of Clarence's Dream (the terrible intensity of which is a sufficient proof that Shakespeare must have been half-drown'd at some period of his wild life) I have had little relish for drowning I assure you. Then as for a pistol or a penknife,—I never yet could bear the sight of my own blood. So that unless I can hit upon ingenious novelty in the way of a self-murdering instrument, which shall combine dispatch, facility, gentility, and pleasure, I think a cross-road has no chance of me Laudanum is a pretty, simple, gentlemanly mode indeed as one would wish to see on a summer's day, nevertheless, I should be loth to die like 'a rat, without a tail'.

Then comes the revulsion of Spirits. Laughter, buoyancy, fun, frolic, extravagance, as causeless and unreasonable, as inexplicable and un-

accountable, as the preceding melancholy, depression, and sadness. In this mood, I utter more folly, commit more insane freaks, and engender more 'skimble-skamble stuff', than would furnish a madhouse; I play off more ridiculous fantasias of the body, and torture my unhappy joints into more grotesque and antic positions, than any human being (but a monkey) could invent. In fine, I unite the two opposite and incompatible characters of madman and fool, in my own person. You perhaps never saw any exhibitions of this nature in your friend Goosequill; nor anybody else. for I have 'wit in my madness', and take care to confine the spectacle to the dumb admiration of the immoveable moveables which adorn my obscure apartments

No doubt you have by this time read the Brides' Tragedy, according to my commands. Tell me in your next what you think of it, (that is, on condition that you think *well* of it, generally speaking: for should you be inclined to depreciate it, take *my* word you know nothing of poetry). In the way of *imagination*, I consider this drama as second to Shakespeare's alone. There is no delineation, or attempt at delineation of character in it; nor do I think the power of delineation at all perceptible in the work. But of works of genius of the present day, it is my opinion that the Brides' Tragedy stands decidedly *first*. Of the author I know no farther than the title page informs me, but I should prefer his chance of literary immortality to the *sum* of the chances of all the other British poets of this present 'poetical age', without any exception whatever. Observe however that I calculate upon the author's pursuing his pursuit. . . .

I think I might have the modesty to conclude here—and as McAlister of Alma Mater says, 'indeed I will; upon my word, I will; I will indeed; I will upon my word' By the bye: you should write to me much oftener than you do. Consider that tho' I may not have leisure to write frequently (tho' perhaps too often for my welcome) yet I have always time to *read* a letter. Take up some subject—your last reading, or the last incident in your memory, and prattle away on it as I do—pop it into a sheet of paper, & send it off to me. Adieu my dear girl, and believe me yours affectionately,

G D.

Remembrance to your Mama and George. Finished April 12th 1823.
I recd yours enclosing a letter from Charles on the 8th.

We have only these letters to tell us how close was Darley's friendship with Miss Neail. She is not mentioned in his later correspondence, though two letters written to her by his youngest sister Frances are extant. Later she became Mrs. Magee and settled in Dublin, where her daughter, whose portrait was painted by William Darley, was the friend of the poet's cousins.

The mortifications of a young free-lance adventuring on journalism, especially if he is handicapped by a literary conscience and a tendency to write poetry, are proverbially many. For several months, it is evident, Darley was no stranger to them. But the time of discouragement passed. In the early months of 1823 he had begun to make his mark as a contributor to the *London Magazine*, and was thus admitted to the fellowship of a famous group of men. In the circumstances, and at this distance, it seems that Fortune smiled and beckoned to him soon.

II. 1822-1826

The 'London Magazine'. 'The Labours of Idleness'

THE first number of the *London Magazine* was published in January 1820, by Baldwin, Cradock, and Joy, and edited by John Scott, who understood the duties of his office remarkably well. He attracted a distinguished band of contributors (Hazlitt from the first, Lamb later, were among them) and the auspices were distinctly favourable until he quarrelled with *Blackwood's*, his firmly-established rival, which had been rude and arrogant. This is no place for an account of one of the most famous literary quarrels. A waspish war of words, to which journalists of the day were no strangers, and certain unsupported but reiterated statements by Scott, led eventually through the mismanagement of a delicate situation to a duel fought with pistols, between that editor and Jonathan Henry Christie, the second of his opponent-in-print John Gibson Lockhart, who with Professor John Wilson controlled the fortunes of *Blackwood's*. Scott died from wounds received in this encounter at the end of February 1821, and on 11 May of the same year John Taylor wrote to Clare, 'We have purchased the *London Magazine* from Baldwin and Co'

John Taylor was a partner in 'Taylor and Hessey', a firm which deserves the gratitude of all for publishing the poems of Keats and Clare, and prose by Hazlitt, Lamb, and de Quincey. The partners are rather shadowy prose figures.¹ There seems to be a certain incongruity between them and their profession as publishers of belles-lettres, but that may be due to our fragmentary knowledge of them. They have been ridiculed for their conduct of the *London Magazine*, and their policy was censured by Lamb. Doubtless they made mistakes, yet magazines rarely retain their splendour for long, and it is indisputable that for a year or two they made the *London Magazine* a name in the land. John Taylor was a pedestrian editor without the flair of Scott: nevertheless there was something solid and laudable in his religious nature. Clare, after picturing a cautious bore, goes on to call him 'a clever fellow and a man of genius', resting the latter epithet on his *Identity of Junius*, a book of some note in its day. Taylor's own articles were often printed in the magazine. Writing, for example,

¹ See, however, 'John Taylor, Author and Publisher, 1781-1864', by Olive M. Taylor, *The London Mercury*, June and July 1925.

to his brother in February 1825, he says, 'In the forthcoming No. the continuation of the Article on the Tithe question, and the article on Hamlet are mine'. Later he was bookseller and publisher to the recently established University of London, and busied himself with Biblical criticism. Hessey, the 'Mistessey' of Keats, after the dissolution of partnership in June 1825, became a book, print, and picture auctioneer; and later, in a letter to Clare of 15 July 1834, Taylor says, 'Our friend Hessey has taken a large old school at Hampstead'. He lived till 1870. Perhaps the atmosphere of the *London* and of literary groups was foreign to the natures of both these men. Certainly they seem a little out of place in it, dull dogs among merry wizards. But that is not the whole of the matter. They were good friends to their contributors. The critical and doubtful Clare, writing to Darley about 1829, still counts Taylor as a friend, and the relations of Darley himself with both partners remained cordial to the end. Their achievement, especially that of Taylor, is sufficient. Moreover, were they thoroughly incompetent, the fact that they published Keats and gave him splendid recognition would be their vindication for ever. It will be seen later that for some years Darley's fortunes were closely associated with those of John Taylor.

The first number of the *London Magazine* bearing the Taylor and Hessey imprint was published in July 1821. John Taylor himself acted as editor, a policy which, according to Mr. E. V. Lucas, proved steadily disastrous. Thomas Hood was made sub-editor. At 13 Waterloo Place, new additional premises taken by the firm, it was the custom of the proprietors to give occasional dinners to their contributors. These famous gatherings counted for much in the making of literary friendships, and we return to them later.

Darley's first contributions to the reconstructed *London* are four scenes, 'dramaticles' he called them, beginning with *The Voyage* printed in December 1822. They are unsigned; but we have the word of Kelsall and Procter that they are his. The internal evidence likewise is conclusive, and in a later letter to R. M. Milnes Darley addresses his correspondent as 'Tramontane' and signs himself 'Litherwit', the names of the two characters in *Olympian Revels*. The pieces are obviously experiments, written with zest and abandon by a young mind rejoicing to indulge his delight in fanciful extravagance. They have movement and wit, there is no dearth of action in either description or situation. The speech is vigorous and uncompromising, the atmosphere far

different from that of the heavy sentimental morality characteristic of the dramatic work of Sheridan Knowles, Sheil, Milman, and Procter. It was, of course, no new thing to write dramatic scenes; but the intellectual protest, conscious or not, against the laboured domestic drama was, at that time, noteworthy. A determined effort at fine writing to which characterization is sacrificed is their chief vice. The dramaticles are interesting but not successful. It will be seen that there is some originality in the choice and treatment of themes.

The Voyage is a youthful frolic, the bombastic account of a miraculous storm at sea related by Mendes to the great admiration of Credular. In it the author, not for the only time, mistakes an unimpressive extravagance for the language of imagination. In *The Ruelle* (February 1823), a quizzical interview between the poor confused poet Helicon and a bevy of learned ladies who think to make game of him, there are certain autobiographical touches dealing with the mad poet, his shabby dress and his adoration of women. The wit is too carefully sought, too laboriously sprightly, but the piece does not lack interest. The scene of *Olympian Revels* (March 1823) is an author's garret, where Litherwit listens to an authentic description of celestial merry-making told by Tramontane. This feast and drinking-bout of the Olympic deities from its correct beginning till

The cloudy floor was strown with gods and goddesses,
And wine cups all the deities were drunk,

is rather heavy-handed fun, though written with the zest and relish of a temperate man enjoying his excesses by proxy. These orgies may have been intended as a counterblast to the work of Keats, in which Darley saw many faults. *The Chase* (July 1823) tells the love pursuit of Nerina, a Catalan girl, by the young shipwrecked Lord Amaryllo, whose reputation as a gallant is well known to the rest of the company. The piece ends with the love chase still in progress, and may have been, with *The Voyage*, part of a projected play.

These 'dramaticles' were Darley's introduction to a band of writers among whom he was to find several friends. Of the principal writers for the early *London Hazlitt*^{*} had gone; B. W.

^{*} Hazlitt, who acted as editor of the *London* during the interregnum following Scott's death, declined whatever proposals Taylor may have made to him when the magazine changed hands, but was afterwards an occasional contributor. There was a possibility, at this time, that H. F. Cary might be appointed editor.

Procter was 'lending a shoulder' to Colburn's *New Monthly Magazine*, as a letter from Beddoes tells us; and Thomas Griffiths Wainewright, 'Janus Weathercock', clever dilettante and flaneur, who belongs both to literature and crime, did not long remain a contributor. There is no indication that Darley knew Hazlitt, but Procter was later a friend with whom he corresponded. It was naturally among the newer hands—Lamb excepted—that he was most at home. The following letter from Thomas Bennion, porter to Taylor and Hessey, and evidently a 'character', anticipates somewhat in date, but merits quotation. It reports one of the magazine dinners at which Darley was present.

(Thomas Bennion to John Clare)

London, March 1st, 1824.

Dear Clare,

I am sorry to hear that you are so ill, but I hope its not dangerous with you, its now some time since I heard from you, I expected you would have been in London before this, and that your New Volume would have made his apperance in the literary world by this time, you no doubt see the list of new works a bout to be publish'd by T & H, the Dinner that was given to the Contributors of the L. Mag this last time was Attended by only two of the old contributors, that you know, the one was Reynolds and the other, Mr C Phillips those two where the chief sport of the party indeed I may say the verry life and soul of it after dinner, and you was mentioned twice or thrice during the night your old friend Elia was prevented from being one of the party thro being ill but he is better, but there wanted him and you and then there would have been more murth among them, I shall give you a list of them at the back of this I hope by the time you get this you will be recovering from your illness by the blessing of god and pray favour me with a letter that I may know how you are, dont wait for sending in a parcel, but if you are able to write send it by post to Fleet Street give my kind regard to your wife and family and accept the same for self with my most ardent wishes for the recovery of your health and Wellfare and belive me your

Truly Wellwisher, etc etc.

Thos Bennion

(1) Mr. Van Dyke

[Perhaps Harry Stoe Van Dyk, 1798-1828; a writer of verse.]

(2) Mr. H Taylor.
Mr. G Darley.

[Henry Taylor (1800-86) At this time a clerk in the Colonial Department; best known as the author of *Philip van Artevelde* (1834) and other plays.]

- (3) Mr C Phillips. [Charles Phillips (1787?-1859), Barrister and miscellaneous writer. After being called to the English bar in 1821 he defended Courvoisier.]
- (4) Dr Darling. [George Darling (1782?-1862). A Scottish physician settled in London where he had an extensive practice among artists Wilkie, Haydon, and Chantrey were among his friends and patients. As John Taylor's physician he doctored Keats, Clare, and Ayton.]
- (5) Revd Mr Percival. [Perhaps the Hon. and Rev A. P. Percival (1799-1853), later a royal chaplain, voluminous theological writer, and supporter of the Tractarian movement.]
- (6) Mr Reynolds and
T and H
This was the whole
[John Hamilton Reynolds]

The company, it will be seen, was not so Olympian as once it had been. Clare, all eyes to see and ears to hear, can provide us with indications of a merrier party.¹ He himself, in his bright green coat and yellow waistcoat, shines out from the black garb of the rest like a cowslip in a dark field. Lamb, calling him 'Clarissimus' and 'Princely Clare', pledges him so often in his own ale that he regards the tankard with anxiety. There is none there with eyes so sharp as Elia's; 'they could pick up pins and needles'. None with a wit so quick and sure. He sits on the editor's right hand, dipping into his great snuff-box, stammering 'at a joke or pun with an inward sort of utterance ere he give it speech . . . as soon as the cloth is drawn, the wine and he become comfortable: his talk now doubles and trebles into a combination of repetitions . . . till at last he leaves off with scarcely "good-night" in his mouth, and disappears, leaving his memory like a pleasant ghost hanging about his chair.' And who is this? 'A little, artless, simple seeming body, in a blue coat and black neckerchief . . . with a hat in his hand, steals gently among the company with a smile, turning timidly round the room.' Who but de Quincey, the X Y Z of the Magazine and rarest of visitors? Dante's translator, the quiet and unassuming Rev. Henry Francis

¹ The most famous description of *London Magazine* dinners is that of Thomas Hood (*Hood's Own*, 1839, pp. 555-60), this also has been used above

Cary, 'a tallish, spare man, with a longish face and a good forehead', comes next. He was a favourite with all, including Lamb, who calls him 'a dear fellow'. Among other things he contributed to the *London* are papers on Early French poets, with translations from their works. The giant of the party physically is Allan Cunningham, 'Nalla' of the Magazine, a good fellow, open in countenance and hearty in manner, who likes everything Scottish and hates puns. But he can roar his approval at a joke when he sees it, despite his Covenanter face. Poetry is the surest game to rouse him to the hunt. Merriest of all, the soul of the feast, is the good-natured John Hamilton Reynolds, friend of Keats and brother-in-law of Thomas Hood. Very different from that 'silent picture of severity', Hazlitt, did Clare find him. 'His face was the three-in-one of fun, wit and punning personified . . . a plump, round face, a nose something priggish, and a forehead that betrays more of fun than poetry. His teeth are always looking through a laugh that sits as easy on his unpuckered lips as if he was born laughing.' Puns drop as easily from his lips as blackberries into a boy's mouth. He captivated Clare, but we can sympathize with Cunningham. John Taylor and James Hessey are present of course, and the indispensable Thomas Bennion makes himself useful in the background. A new-comer is to be introduced to the band, a shy man, 'a tallish, slender, pale, light eye-browed, gentle-looking, baldpate,'¹ in a brown sourtout with a duodecimo under his arm—stammering to a most provoking degree, so much so as to be almost inconvertible—he is supposed to be writing a comedy and tragedy, or perhaps both in one'. It is Darley as seen by young Beddoes early in 1824. When excited he talked well and fluently; perhaps a happy flow of natural speech came to him on an occasion so auspicious. Thus far—the middle of 1823—it was well with him. He was about to publish the series of articles on contemporary drama which made him well known, and at twenty-eight, three years after taking his degree, was breaking bread as an equal with some of the best journalists in the land. Certainly he was excited, especially as the opportunity came after bitter months of waiting. Of those mentioned, Lamb and Cary, Cunningham and Clare became his friends.

The Letters to the Dramatists of the Day, signed John Lacy, began in July 1823. There were six of them, with a postscript and a further letter to Terentius Secundus (B. W. Procter), who had

¹ Darley was not bald, Beddoes perhaps refers to his bare forehead

replied on behalf of the Dramatists. Darley reprinted none of his contributions to the *London* except one story (*Lahan of the Vale*) and a few lyrics, so no excuse is needed for giving some space to a consideration of this series of letters. They form a vigorous and interesting document.

No one who has wandered in the wilderness of early nineteenth-century drama will quarrel with Darley's attempt at denunciation. It was an excellent subject for a young critic, an easy target that could not be altogether missed. There were so many things obviously wrong with the contemporary efforts to write tragedy. Only competent acting and a crude public could have made palatable the wooden stolidity of Sheridan Knowles, the empty heroics of Sheil, Maturin's wild romanticism, Milman's naive hysterics, and Barry Cornwall's pretty insipidities. The work of these writers is, to read, dull and tawdry in the extreme, save where it has become unintentionally enriched with the humour that belongs to bad melodrama. For the stage it is eternally dead. Here, as well as elsewhere, can be seen the paralysing effect of Shakespeare on Englishmen who attempt to write tragedy.

Irony would probably have been Darley's best weapon for the occasion, but his downright style demanded the uncompromising frontal attack that is more immediately effective. Every one not a fool, he thought, must be conscious that whatever merit contemporary tragedy might possess as poetry it had none as effective legitimate drama. His onslaught bristles with hard knocks. The breathless sentences of assault shoot from his pen. When he cannot immediately find a word to his purpose he coins one on the spot. He is like a light-weight dancing round a dropsical heavy-weight and darting in blow after blow at his cumbersome opponent. But there is a sameness about the punches, an inability to finish off the big fellow neatly. Shrewd blows are followed by repetitive taps; many that are shrewd might have been shrewder. He is divided between joy in the fight, the mere pleasure of dancing in the ring, and a kind wish to turn the big fellow into a champion. It is honestly, he protests, for the latter's good that the blood, or water, flows.

The appeal for legitimate drama and effective tragedy might, in fact, have been shorter, but it says much that needed to be said. Darley's censure is directed mainly at the sacrifice of plot, action, and characterization in the works of his contemporaries,

to an all-embracing and emasculate poeticity. 'The softer, the sweeter, the more soul-soothing, the more hushing the poetry is, the better you think it, though the audience go to sleep under your noses' A good plot, he reminds them, keeps an audience attentive.

'You either poke into the crevices and corners of history, real or fictitious, for insignificant events . . . or, being the architects of your own stories—your designs are so light and graceful, so economical in point of material, and of so very Corinthian an order of elegance, that they are nearly invisible to the gross sense of our popular eye-sight.'

And he goes on to tell them in disgust, 'there is as much action, as much business in the last act of *Macbeth*, as in the five-and-twenty of *Sardanapalus*, *Mirandola*, *Evadne*, *De Monfort*, and *Durazzo*'. Even George Barnwell, 'wretched piece of prosaic common-place as it is', does what they cannot. What he wants is 'a good, honest, spirit-stirring, ear-piercing, homely, *English* tragedy, such as will go near to burst me a blood-vessel. . . . Let its metre come a little rough off the palate of the reciter; let it have a little tang of the vigorous soil that produced you. . . .' Instead he is offered such a thing as *Sardanapalus* which Byron, 'with nothing less than the fall of an empire and the overthrow of a dynasty' for a plot, makes as 'insipid as the bursting of a water bubble'.

'Your tragedies . . . appear to me to be deficient in the first grand leading essential attribute of the drama, viz. action Your plots are poor, your stories meagre, they have neither boldness of delineation, nor fullness of incident your scenes are too few, too long, and too seldom themselves subdivided by change of topic, or introduction of new characters . . . your fables want interest; your matter diversity; in short, your action is nothing, and your poetry every thing.'

That is, in brief, the burden of his accusation Those are the themes he develops, unsystematically, for his headlong pen runs away with him.

He attempts to trace three successive or descending schools in English drama, the Dramatic proper (the Elizabethans), using the language of active passion or passionate action; the Rhetoric (Rowe and Lee are examples), with full, polished, empty, and artificial dialogue that seems to have been written by a stop-watch, long measure, or inch of candle; and the contemporary Poetic pure, the worst method of the three, that instead of

tragedies produces Amoebean poems in five cantos each. Here he drops good things by the way, but his knowledge of the older writers is not deep enough to be convincing. Young Beddoes, a fervent student of the drama, saw this weakness at once, and wrote to his friend Procter (who answered Darley on behalf of the dramatists) on the matter.

'I have just been reading', he says, 'your epistle to our Ajax Flagellifer, the bloody John Lacy' on one point, where he is most vulnerable, you have omitted to place your sting. I mean his palpable ignorance of the Elizabethans and many other dramatic writers of this and preceding times, with whom he ought to have formed at least a nodding acquaintance before he offered himself as physician to Melpomene'

The remark is just, if Shakespeare be excluded.

Darley excepted two writers, Joanna Baillie and this same Beddoes, from his general castigation. Miss Baillie's 'Plays on the Passions', which show her chief characters acting under the domination of one prevailing passion, are more tiresome and bombastic than even those of Shiel. Darley showed greater acumen in giving cordial praise to the *Brides' Tragedy*. This work of great promise he welcomed with fervent though discriminating admiration. The author was, he rightly saw, a potential dramatist of rank. Such praise from a stranger was a considerable incentive to Beddoes at a critical time in his life. It is, in the judgement of his friend and editor, Kelsall, almost a necessary feature in his biography. It confirmed him, for a time, in his dramatic endeavours and was no doubt a bitter memory to him when struggling to finish *Death's Jest Book*.

Nevertheless, neither the weakness of Darley's historical treatment nor his recognition of Beddoes is enough to damn or crown the series of Letters. These are, in the main, wise and sane, though in a young critic they might be termed arrogant. They are their own justification. Darley would have emphatically agreed with the words Beddoes wrote to Kelsall concerning a modern cobbling of *The Fatal Dowry*.

'I am convinced the man who is to awaken the drama must be a bold trampling fellow—no creeper into worm-holes—no reviser even—however good. These reanimations are vampire-cold. With the greatest reverence for all the antiquities of the drama I still think, that we had better beget than revive—attempt to give the literature of this age an idiosyncrasy & spirit of its own & only raise a ghost to gaze on not to live with—just now the drama is a haunted ruin.'

Darley never, in these letters, saw things so clearly as that, but by the time he had finished writing them he was approaching that point. He had started—from politeness perhaps—with the assumption that the genius of his contemporaries was not to seek; their faulty methods merely needed correction. He had recognized at the end that the radical defect of genius might be the cause, and he can write in this fashion of the language necessary to the modern dramatist

'I say the language of the Drama must be accommodated to action; that the sentiments and imagery it involves must not only please but *agitate*, that its cadence, accentuation, and flow, must be, (respectively,) ever-varying, emphatic, and precipitous, that its words must knock at our hearts, and that its beauties must not be evanescent, *recherchés*, insubstantial and semi-perceptible, but prominent, bold, striking, and palpable. In a word poetry is the *accident*, not the *essence* of dramatic language. And the *rationale* of this is: that Drama, representing life, must approach to human converse, to natural question and answer, for, where there is such an extreme departure from familiar dialogue, it is no longer a Drama but a poem.'

In dealing with the verse affected by his contemporary dramatists Darley notices a perpetual tendency to run into prose. He observes that the majesty of English verse depends on final pauses (pauses at the end of the line where even relatively unimportant words receive emphasis) as well as on final emphatic syllables. He finds the neglect of these principles a great defect in Beaumont and Fletcher, and Massinger, and flings out a violent indictment of Byron as the arch-patron and propagator of degenerate prose-poetry. Byron's dramatic work was anathema to Darley, though he recognized that poet's power. In this he was at one with Beddoes and probably most of the younger men. But whereas Beddoes was a devoted admirer of Shelley, Darley owned allegiance to no modern. To the objection that Byron's plays were outside the scope of his criticism since they had 'no view to the stage' he retorts that as poems or plays they had a bad influence, and that since they are called tragedies and some have actually been performed they may mislead the public mind into a false notion of tragedy. This is the main indictment.

'You are a man of genius, my Lord, and as such an honour to your country—but, Sir, it were better for our fame that you never had been born amongst us. You have fulfilled one, at least, of a poet's duties, your works are inexhaustible, fatal sources of delight—but you are the

greatest enemy of its poetry your country ever had, you have given *that* a blow which I fear it will never recover To your genius I ascribe the manifest debasement of mind which now pervades this department of our literature, from the rise of your poetic birth-star I date the decline of English poetry . In a word, my Lord, you are the champion and professor-principal of Prose-poetry. That vile and abominable system of versification, which has utterly broken down the strength of our language, was made current, if not coined by you . all our once noble strain of verse is contaminated by the presence of this pernicious leaven. The Apollo of the British Lyre is *Italianated* .

'A renegade from your country, you cultivate a continental distaste for the simple energy of her language. A denizen of another clime, you endeavour to corrupt our poetry with the effeminate manner of a voluptuous latitude. Alas! my Lord, our language was but too much inclined to degeneracy already, our poetry was fast verging to that condition of smooth imbecility which characterises the last ages of the empire of the Muses. It is, perhaps, the tendency of a luxurious nation to decline into effeminacy, of a highly cultivated language to refine itself to insipidity. But it was your part, my Lord, to have resisted this decadence, both of morals and language, instead of accelerating it Our other writers, either through indolence, impotence, or a shameful connivance with the depraved temper of the times, were prone enough to exhibit the gaudy finery they had personally or by proxy gathered from Ind; to substitute the dazzling gewgaws, and splendid phantasmagoria of the tinsel'd East, for our native truth of thought, to exchange our natural simplicity of phrase, for the gorgeous, eye-striking, Asiatic glitter of diction But you, my Lord, are doubly delinquent, you not only adopt this orientalism of imagery, but you reduce the manly flow of our national verse to the lazy current of prose-poetry; . I say that you, my Lord Lucifer, have not only gone astray yourself, but have led the whole train of poetical seraphim after you. Seraphim! ay, and mere mortals too Look at the daily issue of the press, and behold your handy-work. the scribbling rhymester, the newspaper poet, the maudlin Sappho, the namby-pamby versifier, the languid fine gentleman, and the smug lordling, every fool and every fribble, contributes his or her little mawkish stream to the overflowing ocean of prose-poetry. . . This is wherefore I arraign you, my Lord, this is what I mean by calling you the enemy of our poetic literature You have had talent enough to consecrate a false system of versification, to deprave our ear, and to debase our numbers. You have had skill sufficient to dilute our native poetry into a kind of melting mellifluence, too sweet not to be agreeable, too apt for the age, not to become prevalent; too corruptive in its nature, not to destroy what it pervades. Thus does your genius work our disgrace; by its influence, you have debauched our poetry. . . . I could have wished, when you introduced your abominations into the sanctuary of our Tragic

Muse, that her statue had fallen and crushed you. . . We might have permitted you to teach women and fools, weak-headed poetasters, and the ordinary mob of verse-makers, to lisp in effeminate numbers with impunity. but what reprobation do you not deserve for setting a copy of prose poetry to our rising tragedists? for naturalizing that detestable thing amongst our dramatists? . . . I honestly tell you, if I could damn you with a dash of my pen,—for this deed of sacrilege, I would do it. Hence comes it that we are inundated with such a flood of tragedies. Every witless babbler, every loquacious simpleton, every pert popinjay “smit with a love of poesy and prate”, who can bedizen his words with a flush of gaudy, glittering, half-formed images, and deliver himself to the public with a velvet volubility of phrase in something of your Lordship’s elongated suavity of manner,—writes a tragedy incontinent. A tragedy! the highest effort of human poetical powers! *O tempora!* *O prose-poesy!*’

It would be possible to dismiss this as an imitation of Burke, an open letter to George Gordon, Lord Byron. There is much that is unchastened in its noisy impetuosity. Yet its underlying sanity is undeniable; Byron’s influence on poetry was unfortunate, as was Tennyson’s after him. Moreover, though the style is over-violent, the sincerity of the writer is apparent. Throughout the series of letters, and indeed in all his criticism, Darley’s attitude is independent, his opinion fearlessly stated and at first hand. He loathed shams. Literature was to him a religion. When he wrote there was no stammer in his pen.

The *Letters* attracted notice. The reply of Terentius Secundus (the influential Procter) must in itself have flattered the young critic, especially as the author of *Mirandola* on the whole agreed with him. Darley was now fairly launched in London as a literary man. The *Letters* did not satisfy him, and he abhorred criticism as a trade though it was to be his lot to write it for much of his life. Somehow mutton chops had to be earned. It was natural, perhaps, that his bloody assize should start for him a reputation as a savage critic, one who was unwilling, because his own work lacked recognition, to praise the virtues of other contemporary writers. But if it was natural it was also unjust. He held fiercely to the truth as he knew it, and saw all too clearly the faults in the literature and art of the day. He would fain have praised but could not. Instead of burning incense he wielded a flail. Yet there is no stint to his fresh and vivid appreciation of any thing that moves him to admiration.

The list of other critical articles known to have been con

tributed by Darley to the *London Magazine* is not a long one. The most important is a paper on *The Characteristic of the Present Age of Poetry* which appeared in April 1824. It is mainly concerned with the work of Byron, Moore, and Barry Cornwall, and the chief charges brought against these writers are those of sensuality, effeminacy, fluency, eloquence, and lack of intellectual content. We extract a few characteristic sentences

'But, upon the whole, the taste and manner, not only of these nobler birds of Song, but of all our "small poets", all the finches of the modern grove, whether cock or hen, fledged or featherless,—are decidedly effeminate and sensual. The bleak and rocky crowns of Parnassus never kiss the sole of a modern slipper where the moss is velvet, and the plats of herbage silky and spongy; where Nature patches her green floor-cloth with a Turkey grass-carpet,—*there* do our modern poets amble, with their eyes boring the zenith, till they sink over the shoes in the oozy turf, or are drowned (to make bold with the metaphor) in a flood of waving flowers. They never scale the cliff, or are to be seen balancing on the ridge of a precipice; they are seldom immersed in the shadowy forests of the hill, or buried in the dusky and perilous vales which intersect it;—never pull their wreaths off the pinnacle, but cull posies in swarms off the sunniest and gentlest declivities, where they can pluck as they lie between sleep and awake on their lush beds of roses and litters of rank grass, as soft and luxurious as pallets of swans' down or flimsy cocoon.'

Darley, it must be remembered, was indifferent to the merits of Keats and Shelley. There was some reason for his complaint. It is echoed by Beddoes in a letter to Kelsall of August 1824.

'The disappearance of Shelley from the world, seems . . . to have been followed by instant darkness and owl-season, whether the vociferous Darley is to be the comet, or tender fullfaced L. E. L. the milk-and-watery moon of our darkness, are questions for the astrologers. If I were the literary weather-guesser for 1825 I would safely prognosticate fog, rain, blight in due succession for its dullard months . . .'

It was only later in the year that Beddoes knew Darley as a poet. Then he thought the *Errors of Ecstasie* was 'more talented and rich in indication of good' than anything Darley had since done. To the *London* Darley contributed also a number of unsigned poems; among them were *The Rhapsodist*, *The Nightingale and the Thorn*, and *The Fallen Star*. Others, including two sonnets, were afterwards used in *The Labours of Idleness*. It is possible that he wrote some of the dramatic chronicles, which are not often of much account, possible, also, that the notice of Munden's last

appearance on 31 May 1824 is his. Mr. E. V. Lucas gives it, tentatively, to Lamb. There is no convincing internal evidence that Lamb wrote it, but Munden's son and biographer attributes it to him. It reads like a pleasant exercise by Darley in Lamb's manner. A marked file of the *London Magazine* would fill a great gap.

Soon after Darley has established himself as a critic the *London* began to show signs of distress. A new series, without the double columns of the old, began in January 1825, but the auspices were not favourable. Writing to his friend Bernard Barton, the Quaker 'poet', on 10 February 1825, Lamb says—and it is not his first complaint—

'... Our 2nd No is all trash. What are T. and H. about? It is whip syllabub, "thin sown with aught of profit or delight" Thin sown! not a germ of fruit or corn. Why did poor Scott die! There was comfort in writing with such associates as were his little band of Scribblers, some gone away, some affronted away, and I am left as the solitary widow looking for water cresses

'The only clever hand they have is Darley, who has written on the Dramatists, under name of John Lacy. But his function seems suspended. . . '

A letter from John Taylor to his brother James, penned later in the same month, supplements this criticism and gives some insight into the character of John and his ability as editor. He writes:

'I have been but an indifferent correspondent of late, though I had promised myself that if I were but once free from the Editorship of the Magazine I should become attentive to all my friends. I did not however for some time after feel so secure as I could wish in the transfer of that charge to other hands, & fancied it might be in the end necessary for me to re-enter upon my duties. This filled my mind with a sort of business and fatigued my spirits without actually calling forth my exertion. All that however has now subsided and I am becoming daily more calm and indifferent on that head, for all my anxiety did not mend the matter one jot; and to this comparative quiet your kind & encouraging letter, my dear Jem, very materially contributed

'The Mag. has not sold quite so well, the 2nd No. as it did the first—& this perhaps is owing to the more useful articles which are in the latter—a hint is thus afforded us which we must not neglect to profit by. But of both Nos more have sold than usually were of the 2/6¹—By the way did you see Blackwood's second attack (in his last No)—it was

* The price had been raised to three shillings and sixpence.

worse than the first,—in fact too coarse & dirty to have any effect on me or on others—So you see I am really becoming more calm and indifferent than I used to be—and it is not pretence

The end seems near and indeed was at hand. Henry Southern, who had for some time been responsible for the business management, assumed entire control in September 1825. From May 1825 till March 1828 the Magazine was published by Hunt and Clarke. It is no longer a periodical of note. A third series, 'printed for the Proprietors, and published by their agent, Henry Hooper', began in April 1828 and lasted till June 1829. Allan Cunningham, writing to Clare at the end of July in that year, says, 'the Old London Maga is departed this life—or rather has tied its dead body to Campbell's Mag—and they will go down together'. Darley's last contribution was an unsigned sonnet in March 1825.

John Taylor's letter, from which quotation is made above, contains an interesting reference to Darley.

'My friend Darley set off for Edinburgh last Thursday to see if a Mr. Broster there can cure him of his Impediment. We had previously seen a gentleman to whom I obtained an introduction who was perfectly cured, and this heartened [?] poor Darley on to make the trial. Besides all other expenses of the journey, & at least a fortnight's residence in Broster's house at 5 guineas a week, he must first pay 100£ whether the cure be successful or not: it makes no difference'

This journey to Edinburgh does not promise well. It reads like the expensive counsel of despair, a desperate effort to throw off the 'hideous mask' upon his mind that made intercourse with his fellows a gnawing bitterness. Whatever success Mr. Broster may have had with others, he failed with Darley. 'The remedy', says Procter, 'which appeared to consist in causing his pupils or patients to utter all their words in a sort of chant, produced no permanently good effect'. Had it done so the rest of Darley's life might have been very different.

It seems probable, from the following letter to Hessey, dated ambiguously 'Sat^y 7-25'¹, that Darley edited a book published by the firm in that year.

My dear Sir

I have referred Davison [the printer] to you respecting some dates in Ayton's Memoir, which I have no means of coming at. The little Book

¹ The date should read—7 May, 1825. Ayton's book was published in May; and May 7 was a Saturday.

should be out in a few days—I have made one or two alterations in Contents . . .

If you could lay your hands on the Errors of Ecstasie I wish you'd send me half a dozen copies—I wish to give one to Westenra, & another friend. . . .

Have just returned from Windsor, from a visit to the Westenras—went down on Wednesday—saw Herne's Oak, Datchet Mead, etc., etc. Westenra is to steal me a snuffbox out of the oak

Yours very sincerely,
George Darley.

The little book was *Essays and Sketches of Character*, by Richard Ayton (1786–1823), 'R.A.' of the *London Magazine*. There is nothing distinctive about the writing of the rather bald memoir, which runs to fourteen pages. Ayton's work shows considerable knowledge of the sea and contains at least one excellent essay, that entitled 'Sea Roamers—Old Johnny Wolgar', the story of an old man who lived on what he managed to pick up each day along the sea-shore.

Though Darley's work on the *London* was finished, the friends whom he had made there remained. One of the most loyal of these, and for reason, was John Taylor. His comments on the essential humanity of Darley are of much significance. They effectively dispose of the legend that the poet was an egoistic solitary. In a letter to Clare of 8 April 1826 he says

' . . . Many of your old friends ask after you, but I don't see so much or so many of them as I once did. The Loss of the *London Magazine* cut the string that tied us together, then I found that what was called Friendship was nothing but Self-Interest. Darley & Cunningham & Lamb are almost all I see now—the former is a fine kind hearted Fellow as ever lived. I hope he will rise in the world, for he richly deserves it—I mean the world of Fame—he wants no other kind of worldly favour . . . '

To this, though it anticipates a little in date, may be added the stout praise of 30 March 1827, to Clare likewise:

' . . . Darley was with me last night. We were reading some of your poems together. He very much admires with me the Memory of Love, but the Dream he says is more to his Taste—I am glad you liked him so much. Darley is the only Good that ever came from the *London Magazine*.—He is a staunch Friend, & one of the gentlest & kindest of Human Beings. . . . '

This last sentence might have been written about the most distinguished of Darley's friends, Lamb. It is a catastrophe that

the letters which passed between these two men have disappeared. That they were friends is certain, though it is possible they were not intimate. There is a similarity in their sensitive dispositions that may well have prevented a close friendship. Lamb himself was afflicted with a 'difficulty of utterance', and when two people stammer together conversation must be painful. But there are side-lights on the relations between them. It was Darley who, with Mary Lamb, taught Latin to Miss Kelly, 'the most unprofessional of actresses'. He was among the celebrities noticed by that fortunate boy, Thomas Westwood—'George Darley, scholar and poet—slow of speech and gentle of strain. Miss Kelly's constant shadow in her walks amongst the Enfield woodlands'. We find Lamb writing to Cary on 3 April 1826

'It is whispered me that you will not be unwilling to look into our doleful hermitage. Without more preface, you will gladden our cell by accompanying our old chums of the London, Darley and Allan Cunningham, to Enfield on Wednesday. You shall have hermit's fare, with talk as seraphical as the novelty of the divine life will permit, with an innocent retrospect to the world which we have left . . .'

And it is Darley who 'knows all about the coaches'; doubtless he was a frequent visitor.

This is not the only reference to Darley in Lamb's correspondence, as will be seen, but it is one of few. Let us add here, as the most fitting place, one of Darley's recollections. In August 1836 he reviewed in the *Athenæum* an edition of Matthew Prior's *Poems*, and in this review these words occur.

'He (Prior) is best known by his "Nut-Brown Maid", a tedious and heartless amplification of the beautiful old ballad of that name, in the first six lines of which we find more natural melody, however rustic the language, than sweetness of *any* mood in Prior's whole poem. . . . We remember C. Lamb . . . loved to repeat this ballad day after day, and night after night, as it were a secular prayer: he particularly dwelt on the lines—

Now understand; to Wesmarlande,
Which is mine heritage, . . .

'We expect to receive general thanks for every item we record about a character so endeared to all readers of heart or head, as ELIA. His opinions are precious. We shall never forget the peculiar and emphatic way with which he was used to *grind* out the ironical verses from "Blenheim", praising them (by parenthesis) for their English spirit, triumphant sarcasm, etc . . . Indeed the most humorous of all Essayists held both this poem, and that on the "Taking of Namur", as superlative

in their kind—the satirically jocular. ELIA rated the author much higher than we do,—sooth to say, almost on a par with Chapman, Quarles, and the immortal “Margaret, Duchess of Newcastle”.

When Darley ceased to contribute to the *London Magazine* he did not, so far as we can discover, at once join the staff of another periodical. Indeed, we have John Taylor's statement (in a letter of December 1827 to his brother James) that Darley continued to work for him, despite invitations to write for reviews of note. There is evidence here of the poet's effort to escape from the unloved trade of criticism, and of a loyal unworldly nature sufficiently rare to be remarkable. Taylor writes—

‘When I gave up the *London*, Darley was the only Writer in it who stuck by me, and though Poverty and Disappointment in the Success of his Works on the one Hand and the Urgency of Friends (especially Henry Taylor) to write in the *Quarterly* and (of Barry Cornwall) to write in the *Edinburgh* on the other hand, were tempting him to leave me he would not do it he said as long as I could afford to pay him enough for his bare Subsistence, which is £120 a year—and for that he has written all sorts of things—everything in short that I could suggest to him. . . .’

Darley's time, indeed, must have been fully occupied, for he was not only planning a series of mathematical text-books but also writing a volume of prose tales with incidental poems. These last were published in 1826 by John Taylor as *The Labours of Idleness: or Seven Nights' Entertainments*, by Guy Penseval.

There are, as Mr Saintsbury noted long ago,¹ good things in Darley's prose. Some of them are in this book, but they are episodic. *The Labours of Idleness* is an ambitious attempt by an amateur to write what may be termed imaginative prose. There are few marks of the practised hand in it. The contents are neither short stories nor essays, but the something between the two that was popular at the time. Not that the author aimed at being popular: far from it. He advises his reader to leave common-sense behind when reading the book. The trouble is that there is not imagination enough. The author can embroider a slight fancy gracefully, but vigour of invention is wanting, there is a superfluity of sensibility, and the prose lacks coherence and restraint. He adventures too much of set purpose. My thoughts ‘are irregular, venturous, vagabond’, he writes, ‘but I *know* them to be so.’ The trouble lies in this self-consciousness. When he

¹ In his *History of English Prosody*

takes the air with his wings very soon we hear the loud beating and fluttering that betokens his attempt to keep flying. His successes are spasmodic. When these things have been said there is much to praise, particularly the nervous flexibility of the prose and the captivating delicacy of mind that sweetens the whole book. *The Labours of Idleness* is that notable thing, a failure worth many facile successes. In addition it contains sufficient verse to have established Darley's reputation as a lyric poet. But it attracted no attention. Most of the tales deal with love. The one significant exception, *Pedro Ladron, or The Shepherd of Toppledow Hill*, is an exercise in the humorous grotesque. It is verbose and unsuccessful, a 'tall' story told by Pedro to astonish the vulgar; yet for some reason the mind remembers the hams and the keg of canary, the immense flight of steps and the sheep big as elephants. The 'love' of the others is unearthly, a fanciful passion not warmed by human blood. Darley's characters are apt to wander unhappily on a plane between the spiritual and the real. The most ambitious tale of all, the elaborately introduced *Dead Man's Dream* in which a lover who has murdered his betrothed is rescued after death from the various hells by her gentle spirit, is an excursion into the horrible demanding greater intensity than the author can achieve. The images of terror are painted as still life; they do not move our emotions. The plot of the tale owes much to *The Brides' Tragedy*, and the conduct of it is reminiscent of German romance. This description of Avernus is as powerful as most of the writing. It does not touch the nerve of terror.

'The bog seemed to mould its sludge into every odious form that matter could take or invention conceive. Serpents of incredible size rolled their lazy volumes through the stagnant mud, toads lay sprawling on the dikes, emptying their venomous stomachs into the pestilent reservoir, lizards, alligators, monstrous worms and leeches, with other obscene tribes unknown and indescribable, paddled through the slough in such swarms that they verily appeared to grow out of the soil. But what was my horror and disgust, to perceive amongst these vile creatures thousands of beings like myself, over whom they dragged their slimy trails, and who in vain endeavoured to extricate themselves from their foul embraces, or to raise themselves out of the loathsome flood in which they wallowed. . . .'

Darley's womenkind are gentle and modest wraiths who from unrequited love pine rapidly away. Such is the Griselda-like

Jessy of *Love's Devotion*, and the intolerably sentimental Ellinore. *Aileen Astore*, almost a success of atmosphere, tells of a beautiful girl whose influence was shed over a wild countryside where her memory lingers. This and *Lilian of the Vale*, the prose poem of a visionary loveliness that escapes the author's grasp, are the most distinctive things in the book. Both are set in the romantic wild Ireland of the poet's early memories. They are his escape from reality. *Lilian of the Vale* may be interpreted symbolically. It contains the lyric 'I've been roaming' which, set to music by C. E. Horn and sung by Miss Paton, had a great vogue.

More to our purpose here, however, are the Epistle Dedicatory and *The Enchanted Lyre*, both rich in autobiographical matter. In the first, after some sentences that hint at the bitterness of his inward struggle, he proceeds:

'The last [article] is written by an obscure young man, one G—— D——, who twinkled in the literary hemisphere a year or two ago, but has lately disappeared. He was rather an anomaly. Some of his friends were good enough to call him a genius; for which he always (being of a very grateful temper) made them a bow. Others of them thought he was mad, and were even considerate enough to inform him of his deplorable situation; to these also he returned every due acknowledgment. I myself, who ought to have known him, could not exactly say which he was. Sometimes I thought him the one, sometimes the other, sometimes neither, sometimes both. Yet we had been inseparable for thirty years! I loved him as myself, but he, wayward mortal! though by inclination I am sure my sincerest well-wisher, often-times exhibited himself my greatest enemy. He has frequently, on pretence of doing me a service, injured me beyond reparation; and indeed to him are almost all the misfortunes of my life attributable. But I could never prevail on myself to throw him off, although by a most unhandsome trick of his (spitting vinegar through his teeth or out of a quill) he mortally offended several of my best friends, who would never afterwards approach me, but always took off their hats at a respectful distance. Notwithstanding this foolish propensity, he was naturally of an hypochondriac, melancholy disposition, which was no doubt augmented by the nervous sensibility of his frame, and the delicacy of his constitution. Such a temperament is usually coupled with an imaginative brain, and a romantic turn of thinking; he was indeed a day-dreamer of no ordinary extravagance, and was perpetually creating such labyrinths of thought around him, that no wonder if he was sometimes lost in them. But in the main he was as sound as I am, and could even laugh as I did at the excesses into which his enthusiasm led him. Some of his compositions were less irregular, and indeed as works of fancy their novelty of con-

ception and imagery may perhaps recommend them with those who have just as severe a contempt for meteors, and just as profound an admiration for paving-stones, as I wish them. . . .’

This divided mood with its leaning towards despondency is re-echoed in *The Enchanted Lyre*, at once a personal confession (sometimes allegorical) and an opportunity for the introduction of many poems. Darley insists on the reality of his imaginative life, his delight in solitude, his embarrassment in the society of his fellows, his inability to make friends of either sex, and his indifference to fame. He is conscious that he is a poet, and, though he has made many an effort to cease writing, he is compelled to continue.

'I do feel', he writes, 'an isolated satisfaction in the composition of poetry, which I would not sacrifice for more than would make a wise man stare if I mentioned it. . . . I write for self-entertainment,—and perhaps to afford the world, after I have left it, some notion of what strange beings may pass through it without its knowledge.'

Nevertheless, though he says

There is a still applause in solitude
Fitting alike my merits and my mood,

he knows that is not sufficient. He wants the praise and understanding of his contemporaries and despairs of that happy issue. The non-success of the *Labours of Idleness* must have weighed down the scale of despondency still farther.

Poets do not, however, embrace despair at thirty. The consciousness that he was different from other men was a spur as well as an affliction. He had not yet put forth half his strength. He who could write such limpid music as these stanzas could, in his better moments, feel tolerably content.

I could love but one:
He had loved me ever: but the flood's green daughters
With their syren music drew the sweet youth down,
Down beneath the waters,
 'Neath the waters!

In his oozy bed
Coffinless he slumbers, with the wild flood rolling;
Mermen are his ringers, and his dirge is dread,
Still for ever tolling!
Ever tolling!

Writing to Kelsall in January 1825 Beddoes compliments his friend on 'awakening to a sense of Darley'. He adds: 'he must have no little perseverance to have gone thro so much of that play—it will perchance be the first star of a new day' What the play was we do not know, unless *Sylva* be meant. There was, indeed, room for a new star, and no one seemed more likely to provide it than Darley. 'Is Darley delivered yet?' Beddoes asks Procter early in 1826, and again, a little later of Kelsall, 'and what is Elia about? And Darley?' Beddoes was a particularly shrewd judge of literary possibilities

III. 1826-1830

Mathematical text-books. 'Sylvia'. The lyric 'It is not beautie I demande'. 'The Anniversary' 'The New Sketch Book'. Letters to Clare, Cary, and Cunningham. Departure for France.

THE fatal doubt whether he was sufficiently a poet to devote his life to literature had, however, entered Darley's mind. Beddoes, when tortured in the same way, had determined to devote himself to medicine, hoping that the study would broaden his literary work and in addition be a means of advancing the general good. Darley was a mathematician of parts, and from 1826 till 1830 his allegiance was divided between literature and mathematics. As a serious student of the latter he hoped, as will be seen, to advance the cause of knowledge. This attempt, and it was conscientiously carried through, was to provide the something finite and immediately measurable that would bring his mind peace. He found relief both in using these talents and in grappling with problems more 'cooling' than those of literature. From the joy and pride of literary creation to acute depression is no long step.

In a lengthy letter written in December 1826 to C. Babbage, the mathematician, he tells how, when attempting to establish the doctrine of parallels on grounds more level to ordinary capacities than those in Euclid, he accidentally discovered a principle which appears to him of some value to that desirable end. His *System of Popular Geometry* was published by John Taylor in that year. A long letter to Clare, besides giving his opinions on criticism, and reflecting his disappointment, has a good deal to say about his purpose in this work and others that are projected. The 'boom' in Clare was at this time over, and that harassed poet, waiting for the overdue *Shepherd's Calendar* and about to start on his ill-considered adventure as independent small farmer, must have read with a bitter smile the uncomprehending question, 'what *can* be the matter with you, so healthfully situated and employed?' To modern ears the beginning of Darley's letter may seem strange. He has in mind the offensive patronage of Clare by many a pert fool, but he fails to strike the right note.

(To John Clare.)

Friday, March 2, 27.

5 Upper Eaton St.,
Grosvenor Place

My dear Clare,

You see in what a brotherly way I commence my letter—not with the frigid ‘Sir’, as if I were addressing one of a totally unkindred clay, one of the drossy children of earth, with whom I hope I have no relationship, and feel I could never have any familiarity. As æther soars above common earthly air, but willingly blends with a purer, higher atmosphere congenial with itself, so (if I may talk thus vainly of myself) I find my spirit always looking down with ‘proud Parnassian sneer’ on the groveling creatures about me, be they ever so rich or right honorable, but mingling socially with those minds which are somewhat raised above mere worldly thoughts and solitudes. There is a good deal I must acknowledge that hurts my self-satisfaction in the company of worldlings, especially those who have (sense enough, perhaps, but) no sense of the *heart*. Have you ever found that the presence of a man without feeling made you a fool?—I am always either dumb, or pusillanimous, or (if I speak) ridiculous, in the company of such a person. I love a reasoner, and do not by any means wish to be ever flashing, lightening, cloud-riding, or playing with stars. But a marble-hearted companion, who if you should by chance give way to an impetuous fancy or an extravagant imagination, looks at you with a dead fishes eye, and asks you to write the name under your picture—I would as soon ride in a postchaise with a lunatic, or sleep with a corse. Never let me see the sign of such a man over an alehouse!—it would fright me away sooner than the report of a mad dog or a scolding landlady. I would much rather enter the house if it hung out a pestle and mortar—the fear of a drug in my posset would not repel me so inevitably, as the horror with which I should contemplate the frost-bitten face of a portrait such as I have described. But perhaps with all *your* feeling, you will think my heart somewhat less sound than a ripe medlar, if it be so unhealthily sensitive as what I have said appears to indicate. There is I grant in this, as in all other things, a mean which ought to be observed—recollect however, I am not an *Englishman*.

I should have answered your letter long since, without waiting for your Poems, in order to ‘say something handsome upon them’—but have been so occupied with a myriad of affairs, that I have scarcely had a moment to sleep in. It is now, long, long past midnight, and all is as silent around my habitation as if it were in the midst of a forest, or the plague had depopulated London. After a day’s hard labor at mathematical operations and corrections, I sit down to write to you these hasty and I fear almost unreadable lines. Will you excuse them for the promise of something better when I have more leisure to be *point-device*?

Your opinion of my Geometry was very grateful—chiefly as it confirmed my own, that there has been a great deal too much baby-making of the English people by those who pretend to instruct them in science. These persons write upon the goody-two-shoes plan—and seem to look upon their readers as infants who have not yet done drivelling. To improve the *reason* is quite beside their purpose—they merely design to titillate the fancy, or provide talking-matter for village-oracles. In not one of their systems do I perceive a regular progression of reasoning whereby the mind may be led from truth to truth up to Knowledge, as we rise from step to step up to a fair temple on a goodly hill of prospect. They jumble together heaps of facts, the most wonder-striking they can get, which may indeed be said to confound the imagination by their variety; but there is no ratiocinative dependance between them, nor are they referred to demonstrative principles, which would render people knowledgible, as well as knowing, of them. Each is a syllabus indeed, but not a science, it tells many things, but teaches none. There is little merit due to me for perceiving this error, and none for avoiding it. I hope to give the public a series of works neither unworthy of, nor unuseful to it—which will be, not mere parrot-instructors, but treatises adapted for the betterance of the intellectual faculties however humble, or high—for the real enlargement, not the unwieldy and pampered distension, of the mind—whereby the lowliest of us may, as it were, get nearer to God, in the attributes of reason and knowledge, rendering us more worthy of a gradual emancipation from our clayey nature and approximation to a higher essence. This may be thought a most vaporing ambition in me—but no! for who ever mounted to the dome without first beginning as low as the foundation?

You propose two works for my execution. The Arithmetic I shall probably undertake—tho on a very different plan, if so, from any work of the kind I have seen. I have never found that holding blindfold by the skirts of another was a good way of proceeding. The independence of my Geometry is I think its best character—and this I should wish to pervade my other works. *Algebra* is the only true arithmetic—the latter is founded on the former in almost all its rules—and one is just as easily learned as the other. I am wrong in saying this—Arithmetic *cannot* be learned understandingly, but as it is generally taught by rules without reasons, is perfectly unintelligible. If it be to be taught rationally it must be taught algebraically. With half the pains that a learner takes to make himself master of the Rule of Three and Fractions, he could acquire as much Algebra as would render every rule in Arithmetic as easy as chalking to an inn-keeper. I am apt to speak in King Cambyse's vein, but you understand what I would wish to convey.

As to the continuation of the *Lives of the Poets*, it is a work sadly wanting, but I am not the person to supply the desideratum, even were my power equal to the deed. Criticism is abomination in my sight—it

is fit only for the hangmen and headsmen of literature—fellows who live by the agonies and death of others You will say, this is not the Criticism you mean—and that there is a different species (the only genuine and estimable species) which has an eye to beauty rather than defect, and which delights in glorifying true poetry rather than in debasing it. Ay, but have you ever considered how much harder it is to praise than censure, piquantly?—I should be ever running into the contemptuous or abusive style, as I did in the Letters to Dramatists Besides, even in the best poets, Shakespeare and Milton, how much is there justly condemnable!—On the inferior luminaries I should have to be continually pointing out spots and blemishes. In short as a vocation I detest Criticism—it is a species of *fratricide* with me—for I never can help cutting, slashing, punking, and carbonadoing, a most unnatural office for one of the brotherhood, one who presumes to enrol himself among those whom he conspires with the Jeffreys and the Jerdans to mangle and destroy. It is a Cain-like profession; and I deserve to be branded, and condemned to wander houseless over the world if ever I indulge the murderous propensity to criticism.

I was sorry to hear from Taylor yesterday that you were not in good health. What *can* be the matter with you, so healthfully situated and employed? Methinks you should live the life of an oak tree, or a sturdy elm, that groans in a storm, but only for pleasure Do you meditate too much?—or sit too immoveably? Where action is the blood will flow—so that if your brain be too busy, it will heat and inflame with its own internal motion as well as the fiery current that rushes to the chief points of animation. Poetry, I mean the composition of it, does not always sweeten the mind as much as the reading of it—there is an anxiety, a fervor, an impatience, a vain-gloriousness, attending it, which untranny-quillizes even in the sweetest-seeming moods of the poet. Like the bee, he is restive and uneasy, even in collecting his sweets At least I give you *my* feelings—and as I do look upon myself as one of *ye*, I am apt to determine your sensations from my own. I was so pleased with your liking my *Green of the Day**—no one but an author can imagine it The trifle was a great favorite with me—but I could get no one to feel (how wonderful!) an equal attachment. Seriously. how many pretended poetry-lovers I meet with, and how few real ones! A man who honestly confesses he is unable to understand or relish it, I can pity and forgive. But a coxcomb who sets up for *beau esprit*, and 'smit with the love of poetry and prate' pays you compliments per minute, cites L. E. L. or Rosa Matilda, and then to shew he has the judgment of a workman, dares to look up to Heaven as if for inspiration while he empties his cheek of some of his own 'effusions'—such a fellow is fit only for gibbetting. Perhaps the defect is mine rather than the world's—but tho hundreds profess to idolize me as a poet, it appears to me mouth-worship

* Published in *The Amulet*, 1827.

and no more. I wish the enclosed lines could gain me something better will you see if there be any Green of the Day in them?

Farewell, my dear Clare, and when you have leisure and inclination write to me again. You may address your letters for me (in a cover) to—"The Hon. Mr. Westenrā, M.P., Shrub's Hill, Staines"—a friend who will frank them.

Sincerely yours,
George Darley

The *Geometry* was followed, early in 1827, by *A System of Popular Algebra*; and *A System of Popular Trigonometry* appeared at the end of the same year. Taylor, who published both, writes to Clare on May 1:

'... You would also receive another of George Darley's little works. They are strongly opposed by Brougham's Cheap Sciences, but yet I think the works will sell—I hear a very favorable Acct of them from many of our Scientific Men, and the Booksellers have a good opinion that they will prove a successful speculation, which latter is perhaps the better Authority of the two. . . .'

The booksellers were no doubt right. Taylor, confirmed in his speculation and made publisher to the new University of London in December 1827—an appointment, so he tells his brother James, due mainly to his friendship with Darley and the workings of Providence—issued *The Geometrical Companion* in the autumn of 1828, and *The Familiar Astronomy*, a series of still readable family talks extending over twelve evenings, in 1830.¹ The *Geometry* reached, at least, a fifth edition, the *Algebra* a third, and the *Companion* a second. Darley may well have found a devilish irony in this success. During his lifetime not one of his literary works was reprinted; three of them at least were printed at his own expense, and other works remained in manuscript no doubt because he could find no publisher. Another mathematician of genius was more fortunate. The public showed no disposition to prefer the reasoning of *A Syllabus of Plane Algebraical Geometry* or *An Elementary Treatise on Determinants* to the irresponsibility of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*,—the works of Charles L. Dodgson, Mathematical Lecturer of Christ Church, to those of Lewis Carroll.

One of the most popular literary ventures at this time was the Annual, a phenomenon of some note as an indication of prevailing taste. As a rule the prose and verse in these fashionable

¹ *The English Catalogue of Books* gives November 1829 as the month of publication.

books were of secondary importance and served as letterpress for the numerous and expensive engravings that were the main attraction. The Annuals are the happy hunting-ground for the Deltas, Bernard Bartons, Mrs Sigourneys, and Charles Swains of the day, but there are occasional pickings of note for those who have the courage and patience to consult sets of *Friendship's Offering*, *The Amulet*, *The Literary Souvenir*, the aristocratic *Keepsake*, the *Byjou*, and the rest. They satisfied the taste for a pretty present of sufficient literary flavour, and for a period of about twenty years they flourished. Since they were costly to produce the editors were not over-anxious to pay those who provided the innocuous letterpress. There must, indeed, have been many who were only too glad to write it for nothing. Clare was one of the others who expected cash and did not always get it. Neither did Darley, also an occasional contributor, as the following words from Taylor to Clare, dated August 1827, show

'... Darley does not admire the Almanack Makers in general more than you do Lupton Relfe, and for the same Reason in this respect you are more fortunate than he is, to have only one who proves an indifferent Paymaster ...'

The writing of *Sylvia, or, the May Queen*, was Darley's chief literary work during the part of 1827 that he could steal from mathematics. A letter to H. F. Cary, fellow 'Londoner' and close friend, refers to this poem. Cary, now well known for his translation of Dante, had been appointed assistant-keeper of printed books at the British Museum in June 1826.

(To H. F. Cary.)

5 Up: Eaton St Grosvenor Place
Sat^y 10-27.¹

My dear Sir,

I will have great pleasure in going to you on Monday next and meeting old associates of the London—Especially Charles Lamb to whom I have a thousand apologies to make (if I knew how) for my uncivil behaviour to him in your Reading Room. I have sat *beside* him; and looked *over* him twenty times, yet never could prevail on myself to recognise him. This is another of my 'unaccountable aversions',—to speak *first*.

Here is a leaf or two from my *Capriccia*—the Masque I spoke of. You will perhaps see it is founded on *Lilian of the Vale*—but I have de-spiritualised her, and made her merely as ethereal a creature as I could

¹ Mr. R. W. King concludes that the '10' is the day of the month, and the month either February or March (*Life of Cary*, p. 215). But since *Sylvia* was not published till November it is just possible that the '10' stands for the month.

make of clay. The story itself was in fact well enough—and I did not like to spoil it by dramatising. But the *Scene* was capable of a new set of actors—besides that there was a necessity for human interest in a dramatic piece, which I could not well manage without making her simply a woman.

I did not mean that Mathematics *inspired* poetry but only that the Science was absolutely necessary for such an extravagates as *I am*. Only for this cooling study I should be out of my reason probably—like poor Lee's hero 'knock out all the start' and die like a mad dog foaming.

Yours, my dear Sir, very truly,
George Darley.

Sylvia, a 'lyrical drama', was published by John Taylor in November 1827. Writing later to Miss Mitford, Darley pleads as an excuse for its imperfections that it was written 'in the gasping times of laborious scientific engagements'. It is the book by which he has been generally known, and it brought him perhaps more distinguished literary notice than anything else he wrote, though it did not establish his reputation with the world at large. The manner in which he transformed *Lilian of the Vale* may best be told in his own words. It will be seen that he almost hoped for a popular success.

'... Containing a few incidents of the dramatic kind, it suggested the idea of building upon them an Opera, which might not be unacceptable. Accordingly one or two scenes of the following piece were written with that design, but, disheartened by the almost universal failure of modern dramatists, by the prospect of suspense and servility which lay before him in his undertaking, as also by a mistrust of his own powers in this the most difficult walk of poetry, the Author gave up his resolution of writing for the stage. Passionately imbued with a love for theatrical composition, it then only remained for him to modify the scenes already sketched, and to continue his work on the plan of a *dramatic poem*, which he has attempted in the following pages.

'By the above change of object, the Author likewise proposed to himself the benefit of a perfectly unrestricted design, so as to afford him the best chance of succeeding, when his faculties, such as they are, had no obstacles to contend with beyond their own imperfection. On the same principle of writing at the greatest possible mechanical advantage, he has, throughout the whole course of his work, indulged his vein, whatever it happened to be—serious or humorous, didactic or descriptive, he has written verse or prose, song or dialogue, followed the heroic or the lyric measure; been "every thing by starts, and nothing long," according to the impulse of the moment. Under all these favourable circumstances, if he has not succeeded in producing entertainment, he

will regret it most unfeignedly for the reader's sake, and scarcely less for his own'

What is one to say of *Sylvia* now that fairies and pastorals are out of fashion, of its romantic lovers Sylvia and Romanzo, briskly aided by the Fairy Queen Morgana and her elves against the venomous wiles of Ararach and his crew of fiends? That depends, and more than most poems do, on the mood in which it is approached. If the convention be granted (as it must be), then *Sylvia* will on the whole be regarded as a definite, though limited, success. There is nothing else quite like it in literature and it will keep its place. The wonder is that, being so good, it is not better. The machinery and verve are there, the metrical resource and cunning are almost prodigally apparent, and the author wrote with evident enjoyment. But though most of the poem is poetical only a small part of it is poetry. Perhaps that was what Lamb meant when he sent to Bernard Barton by desire Darley's 'very poetical poem' Darley's first intention was sound: wedded to the right music *Sylvia* would have made an excellent light opera. It is questionable whether he gained anything but fluency by his disregard of discipline.

There are faults in plenty. *Sylvia* is altogether too long for a work that must dance with unlaboured lightness. Though it does not exactly 'tail off', towards the end of the third act interest weakens, and the catastrophes of the last two acts are needlessly involved. The action could be simplified with advantage. There is, however, a successful device in the fifth act when Romanzo is shown the illusion of a phantom Sylvia toying with his enemy the fiend-king Ararach. His despair anticipates Hassan's agony in Flecker's drama at the reality of Jasmin in Selim's arms. Darley sometimes forgets that it is better for his characters to remain puppets. When he tries to breathe life into them the result is often weak and always astray. It is perhaps unnecessary to claim Ferdinand and Miranda as the originals of the two lovers, but Morgana is a pale reflection of Titania, Nephon of Puck, Geronymo of Peter Quince, and Andrea, Romanzo's comic servant, of bully Bottom. Reminiscences of Shakespeare abound; Drayton's *Nymphidia* counts for something. The pseudo-Elizabethan prose of Andrea is the most wearisome thing in the poem. The author himself says 'all its prose especially was what a boiling brain first threw up to the surface—mere scum, which I never intended to pass for cream'. Much of it is indeed sorry stuff; it

is strange he did not see that a vigorous pruning was imperative. The 'demon' passages, which are neither horrible nor truly fantastic, demand it

And yet there are many things to praise. The 'scenical directions' in tripping octosyllabic verse, the 'novel headings to each scene' recommended by Lamb, keep their grace. Much of the swiftly moving dialogue sings out for a musical setting. What could be better, in its kind, than the happy poise of this twinkling question and answer?

Romanzo. Who art thou that sing'st so sweetly,
Echo, Echo, is it thou?

(*Voice*) Now I'm asked the question meetly,
I will answer meetly now.

Romanzo. Who art thou?

(*Voice*) Perhaps what thou art!

Romanzo. I'm a rover!

(*Voice*) So am I!

Romanzo. Art thou mortal?

(*Voice*) Not as thou art!

Romanzo. Art thou spirit?

(*Voice*) Come and try!

Romanzo. Now I've asked the question meetly,
Answer me as meetly now.

(*Voice*) I have answer'd thee discreetly,
More I cannot answer now.

Sometimes the note is deeper, as in the scene between the exultant lovers.

Sylvia. Look at the feeding swan beneath the willows:
How pure her white neck gleams against their green
As she sits nesting on the waters!

Romanzo. Beautiful!
She is the lady of the reed-girt Isles!
See! how she swells her navigable wings
And coasts her sedgy empire keenly round!
She looks a bird of snow dropt from the clouds
To queen it o'er the minnows!

Sylvia. Doth she not?
Side-looking, slow, disdainful one!

The lavishly distributed lyrics are unequal. The best, Floretta's 'I do love the meadow beauties', Nephon's Autolycus song 'Who wants a gown', and 'O May, thou art a merry time', have a Par-

nassian perfection of workmanship Théodore de Banville would have admired the delicate grace of

Like a mist
kist
By the matin ray,
Or a shade
frayed,
Thus I wane away!

Sylvia should have made Darley's reputation. The air of distinction and aloofness that it still carries should have been plain even to an age that rejoiced in the banalities of L. E. L. and Omnipresence Montgomery. Its significance lies in the fact that it is a craftsman's protest, possibly unconscious, against slipshod work and lazy sentimentality. To read the forgotten verse of the day, and such later efforts as Tennyson's *May Queen* and Miller's *Daughter*, is to realize that *Sylvia* pointed in the right direction. The protest has something of the quality of Flecker's very conscious appeal to the early Georgians. It was unheeded. Darley's poem found a few distinguished admirers whose number was gradually increased. Cary thought more highly of *Sylvia* than of any other contemporary poem. Miss Mitford, who had never heard of it till Mrs. Cary gave her a copy in 1836, found it exquisite—'something between the *Faithful Shepherdess* and *The Midsummer Night's Dream*'. Coleridge 'sometimes liked to take up the poem', Sir Henry Taylor admired it, and Elizabeth Barrett called it a 'beautiful, tuneful pastoral'. Darley, writing to Procter in 1840, says: 'Why have a score of years not established my title with the world? Why did not "*Sylvia*", with all its faults, ten years since? It ranked me among the *small* poets. I had as soon be ranked among the piping bullfinches.'¹

Success in 1827 would have meant much to Darley. Understanding appreciation might have given him that measure of certainty which would have made an incalculable difference to a poet of his sensitive nature. Instead, *Sylvia* was his third failure. No wonder he was disappointed, consumed by the inward struggle to maintain faith in himself against the depression caused by general indifference. Like Beddoes he was at odds with his age, and he was more unescapably a part of its machinery than that poet, less capable of surveying with detachment and equanimity the

¹ Four songs from *Sylvia* were printed in Peter Cunningham's *Songs of England and Scotland*, 1835

literary rewards bestowed on nonentities. *Sylvia* is a turning-point in his life. Though he went forward he never felt the same degree of hope again. His faith in himself was shaken.

At this time he suffered another check, though it was no doubt comparatively slight. He was a candidate for the Chair of English Literature in the new University of London, and it is a sign of his divided mind that he should have wished to undertake duties which his impediment would have made burdensome. Taylor tells the story in a letter to Clare, dated 20 November 1827.

'I proposed to Darley that we would go this Christmas & see you, if he were willing, as I want also to see Cambridge, which we could take in the way, but he put it off till the Spring Flowers appear. . . Darley is full of Anxiety & Throng—and yet he would not allow it if he knew what I have said. He desires to think lightly of the Affair, & he would have others suppose he does, but the truth must be that he feels anxious at this time. For besides having just brought out his Poem, the Reception of which by the public may be very favorable or the reverse—it is the Toss up of a Halfpenny—he has proposed himself a Candidate for the Professorship of English Literature in the New University. What Success he is likely to meet with no one can tell. His little work of *Sylvia* may assist, & ought to be of Service to him—but all Public Bodies are capricious and he is comparatively unknown as an author, much as he has written. In the meantime he has received very handsome letters from Charles Lamb and our Friend Cary which he will exhibit to the Council as Testimonials of the opinion which some men of acknowledged Genius entertain of him. . . .'

Darley's professorial qualifications were unusual rather than academically impressive, and it is not surprising that the Reverend Canon Dale, M.A., was appointed to the post.¹ The proposed visit to Helpston is mentioned by Darley himself in a letter to Clare, which opens with detailed explanations why Clare had received by Taylor's mistake an unscribed copy of *Sylvia*. These are omitted.

¹ The appointment, which Dale held for about two years, was probably made late in 1827, the actual work began in October 1828. Thomas Dale (1797-1870) first attracted notice while at Cambridge as a poet. After ordination he was well known in London as a preacher with evangelical views, and eventually became a Canon of St. Paul's and Dean of Rochester. The lengthy list of entries in the British Museum catalogue under his name—sermons, verses, hortatory works—is sufficient food for even a curious appetite. His tastes in literature seem to have been Philistine. His claim to remembrance lies in the fact that he was Ruskin's schoolmaster ('my severest and chiefly antagonist master') and—after his appointment in 1836 to the English Chair at King's College—for a time his tutor. In these capacities he was not without influence. See Sir E. T. Cook's *Life of Ruskin*, vol. i, pp. 45-8, 109, 112, 122, 131.

(To John Clare.)

5 Upper Eaton St, Pimlico
Dec. 13-27.

My dear Clare

. . . Having let myself run up such a score with the scientific works during the last few months while I was employed upon *Sylvia*, I was obliged instantly on the publication of that volume, to set about wiping off some of the items. At the very same conjuncture my castle in Eaton St was besieged by Davison's devils (a corps of black hussars, so named for their hideousness and persevering audacity)—demanding certain manuscripts in my possession. These I had to put into a decent shape in order to appease the ferocity of the invaders, and have not as yet finished the troublesome occupation. A number of other demands 'enough to press a royal merchant down' were made upon my literary bank at once—and it has been with the greatest difficulty that I have hitherto escaped actual insolvency. Upon consideration of all the circumstances I think you will feel that I merit rather your pity than your indignation. As I said before I cannot abide to write to such a man as you, when I am not fit to compose a paragraph for a newspaper. It is with extreme unwillingness I sit down to hurry over this letter—and should have postponed it a week or two, but that there was an imputation of ungenerosity in yours to Taylor, under which it is not national to lie for a moment. However I will not forestall my intentions by a longer epistle than is absolutely necessary.

Not a word about your Poems at present—except that I thank you for them sincerely. My lost letter contained a few remarks upon them—but my next shall contain more. Neither shall I say a word about my own work, except that I beg your acceptance of it as a mark of my regard & *brotherly* feeling. I shall be very glad to know your opinion of it, as from the conflicting testimonies given here, I am quite in doubt of my own qualities. Some abuse what others laud, and many say that is my forte which as many call my folly. I am like the man with the ass, and almost wish the thing in the river I am so harassed by these opposite assertions about it.

You are aware of the threatened invasion of the cottage at Helpstone, next Spring. You will be in a worse situation than the old woman in the Chateau Hougoumont at Waterloo. Seriously however, I promise myself much pleasure from the visit—much more than I can promise you. For I have no faculty at conversation—dull as a sign-post. I hope nothing will occur to prevent the expedition—for alas! whenever I think to quit London for a day or two of enjoyment, Fortune is always tempted to throw a huge stone in the very middle of the path which blocks me in without hope of surmounting it. After all, how little different is the life of an intellectual from that of a mere mechanical laborer: both pent up in cities, or hamlets, or cottages, from whence they dare

not stir without risk of loss & injury. However *I will* have a range with you

Over hill, over dale,
Thorough bush, thorough briar,
tho not 'over park, over pale' for fear of the game-laws
Yours most sincerely,
George Darley

The two poets probably never walked together in the countryside dear to Clare's heart, where Darley, attached to his Irish memories, would have found the fields and heath tame and unromantic. It is clear that he was passing through a time of stress and that mathematical obligations left him scant time for literary work. There are bare references to his meetings with various friends, Lamb, Procter and Cary, Cunningham and Taylor. The poems of this time, as far as they survive and can be hypothetically dated, are occasional. One of them, 'It is not beautie I demande', perhaps his most famous lyric, deserves more than a passing mention.

This poem was printed as a genuine anonymous Caroline lyric by F. T. Palgrave in his *Golden Treasury* (1861) and eventually, when assigned to Darley, was banished from the selection.¹ It was also included by R. C. Trench in his *Household Book of English Poetry* (1868). Darley's title to it has not been contested. Archbishop Trench was satisfied that the poem was his after hearing the circumstances from Darley's relative, the Hon. Mrs Livingstone. No manuscript of it in the poet's handwriting survives, so far as we know, but the lines were written in the home of Mrs. Livingstone's mother, Lady Headley, formerly Maria Darley, friend and cousin of the poet. Palgrave's mistake probably arose from one of those mystifications in authorship which the poet sometimes practised. We have found the poem printed for the first time in *The Literary Gazette and Journal of Belles Lettres* for 12 April 1828, where it is prefixed by the following elaborate note which evidently deceived the editor, who should have been put on his guard by the Chattertonian spelling and the curious mention of Churchyard.

'A Song

'Believed not to be generally known, and written by Thomas Carew, the author of "He that loves a Rosie Cheeke"

¹ It is still printed in the editions of 1884 and 1890, but among the notes is the following: 'Archbishop Trench has kindly informed the editor that this graceful poem is an imitation of early style by G. Darley, published *cir.* 1847.'

'It appears (says the correspondent to whom we are indebted for this Song) on the fly-leaf of a book once in the possession of the unfortunate Earl of Strafford, when Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, and in that nobleman's writing. The heading is "A ryghte pythie song by T. C.". probably the Earl's own opinion, his literary disposition being well known. There is (continues the writer), I believe, however, no other reason besides the initials, for attributing it to Carew, than its similarity to the above mentioned lyric in tone and feeling it might have been the production of Thomas Churchyard, an earlier poet. At all events it is manifestly a very old song The spelling is a little altered to make it readable.'

Though Darley's lyric derives from Carew (the poem might superficially be called an amplification of the first two stanzas of 'He that loves a rosy cheek') the result is no mere clever imitation. There was between the two poets the bond of felicitous workmanship. Darley gives the thought the individual twist that makes it his own, and in several stanzas rivals the grace of his master. The prevailing note, to be paralleled many times in other lyric work, is that of Darley, not Carew.

One of Darley's closest friends at this time, and for many years, was Allan Cunningham, already introduced as his fellow contributor to the *London Magazine*. Cunningham, born near Dumfries in 1784 of poor parents, had been apprenticed to a stone-mason His father had known Burns. He early showed a love for traditional song and story, a reverence for letters, and a lyrical talent that gained him some local reputation and the encouragement of Hogg, the Ettrick Shepherd. When R. H. Cromek (Blake's Cromek) was gathering his *Remains of Nithsdale and Galloway Song*, published in 1810, he invited the help of Cunningham, who sent him songs and ballads that he accepted as genuine, whatever he may have thought of them. Cunningham, indeed, claimed later to have 'contributed' almost everything in Cromek's book, which means that he wrote a considerable part of it himself, and collected (and probably revised) most of the rest. How far he depended, or if at all, on tradition in the poems he definitely claims as his own has not been determined. The authorities, Percy and Scott, were not deceived by his pretended archaism, and Hogg at once discovered the hand of his friend Allan. In connexion with the volume Cunningham came to London, and after earning a precarious living as parliamentary reporter was engaged in 1814 by Chantrey, whose friend and

assistant he remained till the sculptor's death in 1841, almost a year before his own. In the studio he became acquainted with many men of note. His evenings were devoted to literary work and journalism, in which he soon made his mark. Eventually he became well known as a man of letters. His romantic novels are now little read, but he is still remembered for a few lyrics, his biographical sketches of British artists, excellently written if not always accurate, and his meritorious edition of Burns. We shall have occasion to mention these two works later.

Carlyle has drawn, in retrospect, the most living portrait of Cunningham, the friendly fellow Scot who walked over now and then from Pimlico to Cheyne Walk, and was pronounced by the fastidious Jane Welsh to be 'a solid Dumfries stone-mason at any rate'. The reverse of the medal is almost a picture of the artist

'He had very smooth manners, much practical shrewdness, some real tone of melody lodged in him, item a twinkle of bright mockery where he judged it safe, culture only superficial (of the surface, truly), reading, information, ways of thinking, all mainly ditto ditto. Had a good will to us evidently; not an unwelcome face, when he entered, at rare intervals; always rather rarer, as they proved to be, he got at once into Nithsdale, recalled old rustic comicalities (seemed habitually to dwell there), and had not much of instruction either to give or receive. His resort seemed to be much among Scotch City people, who presented him with punch-bowls etc., and in his own house there were chiefly unprofitable people to be met. We admired always his sense of managing himself in strange London; his stalwart healthy figure and ways (bright hazel eyes, bald open brow, sonorous hearty tone of voice, a tall, perpendicular, quietly manful-looking figure), and were sorry sincerely to lose him, as we suddenly did.'

Honest Allan, as he was usually called, kept to the last a tang of rusticity. Moreover, he was strangely conscious of his limitations, and was indignant that critics made no allowance for them. Writing in October 1828 he says:

'Indeed, I have had hard measures dealt me by critics generally. . . They make no allowances for my want of time and skill, and seem to expect as clear and polished narratives from my pen as they receive from men of talent and education too. If they would try me as they have tried other rustic writers by their peers, I should not object. . .'

No appeal could be more disarming. The people to be met at his house were not always unprofitable. Sir Walter Scott was of their number. He admired this 'leal and true Scotsman of the

old cast', and held him to be a man of genius who required only 'the tact of knowing when and where to stop'. Lockhart tells how Sir Walter, when breakfasting with Cunningham in April or May 1828, looked round the table and asked his host what he was going to make of his boys. On learning that the eldest would like to be a soldier, preferably in India, he let the matter drop, but with ready kindness secured immediately afterwards the promise of two cadetships in the Indian service for Joseph and Alexander, the eldest boys. There is reason to suppose that one cadetship was made certain before the other; and all things considered, it seems most likely that Darley, in the following undated letter, refers to the appointment of Joseph Cunningham. The first part of the letter is mysterious. Darley would hardly refer to a piece of good fortune in terms of a bereavement. When Cunningham announced the cadetships to his mother, in a letter of 16 August 1828, he wrote, 'We were all much affected by your very kind and touching letter. We are now all well in health, and sad at heart at times, but the duties of the world must be done, and I have my share.' His biographer says without further details that 'he had one daughter to whom he was devotedly attached, but who was early removed by death'; but she was living at this time. The reference may be to the death of the fourth of his five sons, about whom we have discovered no details.

(To Allan Cunningham)

[No address or date]

[May 1828?]

My dear Allan,

Tho somewhat of a dreamer, I have little faith in dreams, yet a coincidence between one I had last night and the subject of your letter this morning is so strange that I cannot forbear mentioning it. I walked with a friend on the shore of a wild lake or river, on which a couple of swans with a family of young cygnets were floating along. We had great delight in looking at them. This was soon disturbed by a kite pouncing its beak at one of the cygnets, and tho the parents drove him away, the young one was killed and sank into the deep. On which my friend exclaimed 'Poor bird' with much sorrow 'Poor bird' said I,—'No! but poor *we*. The bird is now beyond all evil; it is we who have lost the pleasure of contemplating it, that are the real objects of pity.'

This little vision would have been more applicable if the parent swans had thus communed—but as it is I thought there was some matter of consolation in it.—Stranger still, it was the arrival of your note which awoke me just after my dream had ended! But indeed the whole preceding night my thoughts were of death and sorrow.

I am glad to hear of your son's appointment.¹ Anything in my power to fit him for success you may command. I have already done as much for him in the Elements of Geometry as I could—the rest he must do for himself. We now propose commencing with those of Algebra, and proceeding thro that in like manner. With a similar course thro Logarithms and Trigonometry he will be completely made up in the Elementary Mathematics. This can all be accomplished, even with a knowledge of Oriental languages attaining in the meantime, before next Christmas To be a *Mathematician* however depends, as I said before, on himself.

I shall be at home this evening, perhaps at five, but certainly at six, and shall be happy to see him then, as well as every Monday evening after. A weekly lecture will be sufficient for the purpose mentioned, with industry on his part—an *hourly* one would be insufficient without it—Do not think from this reiteration that I hint inattention on his part—quite the reverse—he seems willing and deeply interested. But I know that young men who have not acquired Academic habits, are quite unaware of the necessary severity in order to attain the end in view. This, and a profound sense of the great utility of these sciences (in every profession but *my own* and in few more than his) makes me wish to impress him with a still stronger determination to proceed enthusiastically with them.

Pray give my kind respects to Mrs. Cunningham, and believe me yours most sincerely,

George Darley.

Memorials of the friendly relations that existed between Darley and Lamb are all too few. An invitation from the essayist to Cary, in June 1828, makes mention of Darley. Lamb prefers not to meet Wordsworth in London where there is temptation for him to indulge too freely, but he says, 'Now let me beg that we may meet here with assured safety to both sides. Darley and Procter come here on Sunday morning, pray arrange to come along with them.' A longer visit to Enfield, presumably on another occasion,

¹ The son was probably the eldest, Joseph Davey Cunningham (1812-51), who showed a special aptitude for mathematics and was coached by Darley, as references in later letters show. He passed out of Addiscombe first in 1831, with first prize for mathematics and the first nomination to the Bengal engineers. After training at Chatham he sailed for India in 1834. There he had a brilliant career until he was sacrificed, it seems, to official jealousy or to stupidity connected with a chapter in his book, the *History of the Sikhs* (1849), which has been described as 'one of the most valuable books ever published in connexion with Indian history'. Alexander also did good work in India. Peter, the third son (1816-69), was the well-known antiquary and man of letters. The son mentioned in the letter may less possibly be Francis, born in 1820, who joined the Madras army as an ensign in 1838, and later edited various dramatists. If so, the letter belongs to 1836 or 1837.

is chronicled in the following undated letter, which shows that Darley was Lamb's welcome guest.

(To Allan Cunningham)

Wednesday [No address or date]
[Mid-June 1828]

My dear Allan,

Many thanks for the Ferintosh¹—if it be as honest (in its way) as the Sender I shall be satisfied with it—tho I am not much of an Irishman as to adoration of ishkabaugh You must come some night and give it a higher relish by your conversation.

I saw C. Lamb—spent a delightful two days with him—could hardly get away, & have promised to go there soon again—without a formal invitation, which he hates He is so devilish idle that I fear much for *all* to whom he has promised contributions. I am however to see the MS of a play he has lately written—and I was just thinking whether 'A Scene from an unpublished play' by C. Lamb, might not be suitable to you Should you like this?—if so I will endeavor to procure it.²

Of course I should very much like to see Southey, as a man whose learning & genius I estimate highly—But do not think of asking him on *my account*—I should only gape & stare at him, as I did at Wordsworth & Coleridge t'other night—or perhaps make a fool of myself if I attempted to stammer out an observation.³

You are getting on rapidly I hear with the Annual—and I hope satisfactorily too

Yours most truly,
G D.

A. Cunningham, Esq

My good fellow, I must make a regular *demand* of you for a loan of Scott's Napoleon⁴—it is but this moment I have heard you possess a copy, or you should not have read it in peace for my importunity

¹ A famous distillery near Dingwall, Ross-shire

² Darley possibly refers to *The Wife's Trial* or, *The Intruding Widow*, a Dramatic Poem, written in 1827, first published in *Blackwood's*, December 1828 (see Crabb Robinson's *Diary*, ed Sadler, vol. II, 13 Dec 1828), though Lamb also had by him *The Pawnbroker's Daughter*, first printed in *Blackwood's*, January 1830, referred to by Lamb in a letter to Bernard Barton of July 1829 as 'an old rejected farce'.

³ The date of the letter is determined by this paragraph and the next Southey went to London in 1828, 'about the third week in May', to see a dying uncle, to undergo an operation, and incidentally to sit to Lawrence and Chantrey. He was back in Keswick by the middle of August at the latest, and did not visit London at all in 1829 In June and July 1828, Wordsworth and Coleridge, with Dora Wordsworth, spent about six weeks together in Flanders, the Rhine Valley, and Holland. They left London on June 21, and returned thither, from Ostend, on August 5 (see *Correspondence of Henry Crabb Robinson* . . . , ed Morley, I 189)

⁴ Published in 1827.

The Annual with which Darley was trying to help his friend was Sharpe's new *Anniversary* (started as a rival to Heath's *Keepsake*), of which Cunningham was editor. Sharpe's venture was a bold one, since 15,000 copies of the *Keepsake* were sold in 1827, and, according to Southey, who notes the fact with several marks of exclamation, 4,000 yards of red watered silk at three shillings a yard were bespoke for binding the current volume. But Sharpe expected to kill some of the smaller Annuals, and it was the golden age for engravers. Cunningham managed to produce a book much more attractive than most of the other 'mushrooms', though Beddoes, writing from Gottingen, thought all the folks, except Procter, seemed to have been trying who could be most stupid. His contributors included Southey (whose rhymed *Epistle to Allan Cunningham* was a matter of pride to the editor), Wilson, Lockhart, Crofton Croker, Hogg, Miss Mitford, Barry Cornwall, Clare (*Ode to Autumn*), and Darley, who is represented by a sonnet, *The Wedding Wake*, and *The Sorrows of Hope*. The preface is interesting for a reference to the premature death of R. P. Bonington (spelled Bonnington), 'an artist of great natural powers and rising eminence', one of whose pictures figured among the engravings. Ten thousand copies of the book were printed, and six thousand were sold before publication in November 1828. It was nevertheless a financial failure. Cunningham began, as will be seen, to prepare a volume for the Christmas of 1829, and also thought of taking the offensive by converting the book into a monthly publication. He persevered in neither intention.

The Sorrows of Hope, one of Darley's longer poems, is extant in two forms. In addition to the version printed by Cunningham there is another, much longer and carefully written in the poet's own hand, on paper watermarked with the date 1827. Pencil-marks made through and round various lines in the manuscript show that Darley intended the work to be less diffuse. The shorter and better version is probably due, therefore, to the poet himself, though it may have been shaped to fit the space that Cunningham allowed him. But even then it does not make a good poem, and, unfortunately, many of the best lines, in particular the introduction, have been sacrificed. The work is curiously unequal, the romantic atmosphere uncertain, and the run of adventure poorly conceived. It reflects the poet's disappointment in his search for an ideal that eludes him, a hope that vanishes or betrays him

when he seems to have attained. As an allegorical record of his spiritual progress it is valuable, but its greatest interest lies in the probability that it is a premature attempt to write *Nepenthe*, which it resembles, at a distance, in machinery and intention. Doubtless the frigid reception of *Sylvia* counted for much in its pessimism.

In a letter of October 1828 Cunningham announces that he has some notion of writing the *Lives of the British Painters*, on the plan of Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*. If he had not then already made some progress in the undertaking he must have worked furiously, for the first volume was issued about the middle of 1829. Among the artists dealt with is Gainsborough, and Cunningham evidently asked Darley to write for him a criticism of *The Blue Boy* and *The Cottage Door*, two pictures that he wished to mention. Darley's lengthy reply, probably his first essay in art criticism, Cunningham preserved.¹ He says that he had no difficulty in forming an opinion on the two works, and prides himself on the independence of his attitude. He was, indeed, trying to see with his own eyes. *The Blue Boy*, he declares, must be in some degree faulty, since its silvery azure strikes the mind at once but does not immediately gratify. Yet its other merits make it so agreeable as to efface, in a short time, almost every recollection that it had once offended.

'A tender softness or mellowness of hue into which this cerulean monotony which we blame at first is reduced,—nay a degree of warmth by no means to be expected,—form perhaps the most remarkable quality we observe in the painting. It appears to me that the Artist caught this lovely tint from a view of the horizontal sky, or calm surface of the distant ocean, a little after sunrise, of a breathless summer's morning: both have that smooth silver-blue tint and warmth of tone, which distinguish the drapery of the portrait, azure though it be to the very fullblown ribbands on the instep and the point of the shoe itself. As to the countenance, tho I cannot say whether it was ever like any living being, it is certainly very life like. What a countenance can exhibit beyond fidelity and reality, is I believe *sentiment* and nothing more,—I mean something characteristic, favorable or unfavorable. There is a great deal of this in Gainsborough's portrait: it does not merely look straight before it as if a sail were in view, nor follow you all round the room with its white *sights* till you wish it turned to the wall. . . It is

¹ It is undated, but since Cunningham, in his book, adopts several of Darley's sentences, its date is sufficiently determined. Darley told his friend to make whatever use of it he pleased.

the countenance of an ingenious & intelligent boy, with the air of immediate thought in every feature. The back-ground of the picture is smoky and confused, but detaches the figure very well from the canvas; and this is all for which it was requisite. Take it for all in all, I can only say that I wish our future Artists may be at any time entitled to despise the Blue Boy for in that case they must far excel Velasquez and Vandyke, nay Titian himself.

'Nearly opposite the Blue Boy is Gainsborough's other famous work—the Cottage Door. This represents a Cottage Matron with an infant in her arms, and several older children around her "supping *broo*" at the door of a cabin. The whole is a buried scene, deeply shut up in a close, wooded nook. There is great breadth and mass about it, with a richness of coloring, or a *brown goldenness*, which I think generally distinguishes the landscapes of this Artist. He reminds me more of Gaspar Poussin, tho not in this quality, than any ancient master I can think of at present: there is the same deepness of background, and inflexibility of foliage, about both. Indeed, I can hardly feel myself *amongst* the trees of any landscape-painter but Claude; there is such wonderful ease and freedom of attitude about them! they are the only painted trees which seem to *blow*. G. Poussin's, on the contrary, are such *wooden* trees! His foliage consists, as it were, of *heaps of hands* with spread fingers—the leaves all diverge like trefoil, quatre-foil, etc. I recognise the same fault, or an approach to it, in almost all landscapes but those of Claude; and by this test alone I would decide upon the Marriage of Rebecca at the National Gallery being genuine—tho defective in some points, the foliage determines it a Claude at once, no one but he could have given it that *roundness*, and miniature delicacy, airiness, and mobility. Gainsborough's foliage in the above painting strikes me as coarse, blotchy, and stiff. But the largeness of manner, and depth of body, which this landscape, as well as all of his I have ever seen, presents, are with me great recommen[d]ations. Not to speak of the beautiful group, (in which by the by we see the *pyramid-law* perhaps too geometrically observed), and their manifest state of living existency! The Matron herself is, perhaps, the most *natural* beau-ideal of a youthful Cottage Dame, on canvas—rustic beauty exalted by a gentility of expression which we seldom find in the peasant countenance, if ever. . . .'

The old *London Magazine* group met less frequently now that Taylor had become a university publisher. On Christmas Eve, 1828, he writes to Clare:

' . . . Darley was with me yesterday—He is as well as usual, and as kind hearted as ever—but I don't very often see him now—my Distance from his Lodgings is so much greater, & again I am now surrounded by so unpoetical a lot of men, that our old Subjects are seldom on the Carpet.'

The making of mathematical text-books leaves little of note to record of Darley for the next two or three years, but in 1829 he added another literary work to his list of failures. This was the *New Sketch Book* by G. Crayon, jun., in two volumes, printed for the author. The first volume is composed of new work, mainly pleasant and colourless essays in the manner of Washington Irving on such subjects as 'A Country Sunday', 'Humble Virtue', and 'The Afflicted Family'. They are more ordinary than most of Darley's work. The second volume was made by binding up the unused sheets of *The Labours of Idleness* with a new title-page. It is difficult to know how the poet expected to sell these two volumes and why he burdened himself by a pseudonym at second hand. The venture reads like one of despair.

The last letter to Clare, while it makes no mention of the projected expedition to Helpstone, contains reasonable poetic counsel. Darley saw Clare's limitations too clearly to be a blind admirer of his work; 'he did not like your little Poem on Woman's Love', writes Taylor to Clare, 'half so much as I did'. Clare, like Burns, had his conventional, uncharacteristic side, and to this such work as 'Woman's Love' belongs.

(To John Clare.)

London. 5 Upper Eaton St.,
Grosvenor Place.
March 14-29.

My dear Clare

You have been reproaching me, I dare say, for my long neglect of your last letter. but might have saved yourself that trouble, as my own conscience has scourged me repeatedly these two months about it. The truth is I have been a good deal harassed in several ways, and now sit down, in the midst of a headache, to write, when I can hardly tell which end of my pen is paper-wards. I will attempt, however, to return your questions legible if not intelligible answers.

There have been so many 'Pleasures of so-and-so', that I should almost counsel you against baptizing your Poem on Spring—the 'Pleasures' of anything. Besides, when a poem is so designated, it is almost assuredly prejudged as deficient in *action* (about which you appear solicitous). 'The Pleasures of Spring', from you, identified as you are with *Descriptive* Poesy, would, almost without doubt, sound in the public ear as the announcement of a series of literary scene-paintings. Beautiful as these may be, and certainly would be from your pencil, there is a deadness about them which tends to chill the reader: he must be animated with something of a livelier prospect, or, as Hamlet says of Polonius,—'he sleeps'. It may be affirmed, without hesitation, that however indepen-

dant of description a Drama may be, no Descriptive Poem is independant of something like dramatic spirit to give it interest with human beings. How dull a thing would even the Great Descriptive Poem—the Creation, —be, without Adam and Eve, their history and ‘hapless fall’, to enliven it! But I cannot see why you might not infuse a dramatic spirit into your poem on Spring, which is itself only the development of the living principle in Nature. See how full of life these descriptive scenes in the *Midsummer Night’s Dream*, and the *Winter’s Tale* are! Characters may describe the beauties, or qualities of Spring, just as well as the Author and nothing prevents a Story going thro the season, so as to gather up flowers and point out every beautiful feature of the landscape, on its way. Thomson has a little of this, but not enough. Imagine his ‘*Lavinia*’ spread out into a longer story, incidents and descriptions perpetually relieving each other. imagine this, and you have a model for your Poem. Allan Ramsay’s ‘*Gentle Shepherd*’ would be still better, only that his poem is cut into actual dramatic characters. Besides, tho with plenty of feeling, and a good deal of homestead poetry, he wants imagination, elegance, and a certain scorn of mere earth—which is essential to the constitution of a true poet. You want none of these, but you want his vivacity, character, and action. I mean to say you have not *as yet* exhibited these qualities. The hooks with which you have hitherto fished for praise in the ocean of literature, have not been garnished with *lure-bait*; and none of us can get a bite without it. How few read ‘*Comus*’, who have ‘*The Corsair*’ by heart! Why? Because the former, which is almost ‘dark with the excessive bright’ of its own glory, is deficient in human passions & emotion, while the latter possesses these, altho little else.

But indeed, if you would angle most successfully, I would recommend the plan of Mr R. Montgomery to that of Shakespeare himself. I read enough of ‘*The Omnipresence of the Deity*’ to make me wish there were no such attribute—tho then to be sure we should have had a poem on the *Omniscience*, or the *Omni*—something-else, instead of it. I suspect that the ‘*Lady*’¹ who praised Mr M. so much, knows more about his poem than she does about poetry.

Allan Cunningham tells me you have sent him one or two poems for his next Annual. I have also given him two, and a prose Story interspersed with songs which I hope you will like.² These, and a set of detached verses, comprise all I have done in that department since I saw you—my time has been so much occupied by scientific treatises.

I have not seen Mr. Taylor for some weeks—he and I live now at the

¹ The redoubtable Mrs. Emerson

² This ‘next annual’ was never published. Darley contributed some poems, not of the first importance, to the July and August numbers of Sharpe’s *London Magazine* for 1829, which Cunningham may have edited.

very opposite ends of the town, and he is almost eaten alive with Professors of the New College.

Is there any chance of your coming to see your friend Mrs Emmerson again?¹ If you should come, she herself will not be more glad to see you than

Your sincere friend and *brother-poet*,
George Darley

Early in 1830 *Familiar Astronomy*, the last of Darley's text-books, was published, and he was released from the inquisition of Davison's 'black devils'. The book was the occasion of a letter to two of his nieces, the daughters of his sister Mary who had married Charles Newenham. The comments of the little girls on the heavy official epistle of their clever uncle George will never be known, but its preservation shows that they were impressed. Did they perhaps say, 'Mama, I wish uncle George did not use so many long words', or, 'Mama, what *is* a rational person?' Or were both uncles and nieces different in those days?

(To Miss Newenham

and Miss Maria Louisa Newenham)

London 5 Upper Eaton Street,
Grosvenor Place,
January 26th, 1830

My dear little Girls,

I have had so many letters to write, and so much business to engage me, that I have not leisure to say much in the present note. But I send you a Book which I hope will prove much more agreeable and useful than a letter. You, perhaps, are not quite old enough yet, to read this Volume but sense will come before its time, if you exercise your understandings by reading and conversing with rational persons Your Mama, who was always so clever at School, is the best example you could follow. She has, I dare say, taught you the Astronomy I gave you in Ireland; and she will teach you that which I send now, when you are able to comprehend it

The Book I promised William-Henry accompanies your Volume I hope he will not let my Keepsake remain a useless present: if he would be my 'white-headed Boy', he must love reading. To be a good scholar is the best recommendation with me, and to be ignorant is no recommendation with anyone Tell him to write to me what he thinks of *Lord Burleigh's character* as given in the Volume I send him.

When George, and Annie (I believe that is her name) are able to read fluently, I will send *them* likewise, a Book each. I forget little sister's name, and only know that her *soubriquet* had a very close resemblance to *Clootie* she too shall have a Book on the same conditions as Annie, but

¹ Clare had visited London early in 1828

it will be some time before she can fulfil them. This is the fashionable way to spell such words as 'fulfil', tho' I believe its shortness is its best quality. The old, and true way, 'full-fill', was perhaps better, tho' less convenient

Love to Mama, Papa, and all at home. Tell Mama that I am in daily expectation of a letter from her. I should also like to have one from each of you.

Farewell, my dear little girls: be as good as you ought to be, and then you will be as happy as I wish you

Your affectionate uncle,
George Darley

Among the happiest of the Darley letters that have survived are those to H. F. Cary, 'pleasantest of clergymen' who was, says Procter, 'intimate chiefly with Charles Lamb . . . and with George Darley'.¹ He seems either to have encouraged or provoked the vein of nonsense in the poet whose masterpiece in this kind is a delightful rhymed request for a meal, written from the British Museum Reading Room in May 1830. There is a light-hearted gaiety about the lines that no doubt reflects Darley's joy in escape from text-book drudgery. More will be heard of Cary, who remained one of the poet's chief friends.

*Ode to a Certain Librarian*²

Reverendissimo Translator of the Inferno,
From this poetical Epistle you may possibly, by some means or other,
hook or crook, contrive to learn-O,
That I (Deep dweller of the Musean Purgatorio!)
Am in the second story-O

Tell me, O tell me, Sage Anglifyer of the Paradiso!
Will there be, at four o'clock to-day, anything on your table, in the
inviting shape of bread-&-cheese-O?
Or, haply, a stray potato,
To be ate-O?

If that there will, (Grave Sir!) pray favor me with a line-O,
And I, perchance, may condescend to dine-O,
Crack jokes and make me merry
With you & Mrs. Cary;
As of old
We are told

¹ In the *Familiar Astronomy*, after having quoted from Cary's translation of Dante, Darley writes: 'It is by one of the best of men, and of translators—one of whose genius and delightful simplicity of character I have a particular respect, though I sometimes irreverently jest with him . . .'

² Endorsed by Cary—'G. Darley, after April, 1830'

Great Jupiter, King of Gods, came down from Heaven, to cram his
 eternal *fauces*,
 At the expence of that most hospitable Couple, Philemon and good
 Baucis¹

[(Subscription in smaller writing)]

May fifteen In Reading-Room

I wait

The fate

That you shall doom:

Whether I am to get my dinner,

Or fast like a poetic sinner

G D.

The publication of the *Familiar Astronomy* left Darley free to follow his own bent. It is possible that his text-books brought him money, for even as late as 1844 we find Taylor and Walton, booksellers and publishers to University College, advertising at some length in the *Athenæum* Darley's Scientific Library. Now that he had leisure he determined to travel. Hessey writes to Clare, in a letter dated 15 September 1830:

' . . . Darley is gone to France to spend a year or two in travelling about the Continent I believe he intends to pass the winter in Italy, but we know nothing of his movements. He has not written to any of us since he went and his departure was so sudden that he did not take leave even of Taylor but by a letter which he left behind him. . . '

The same news is given in the second of two sprightly letters written by Darley's sister Frances from Dublin to Miss Neal, who was staying at Bangor. The first she was asked by her brother Henry to begin, and thereupon filled the whole sheet except one corner with an account of Dublin at Christmas time and feminine gossip. There is just space for him to scribble his complaint—'I asked Fanny to *begin* a letter for me . . . so she has with a vengeance—her beginnings I see have no end—where the devil do you women find wherewithal to say so much abt nothing.' The second letter, dated the 18th of June 1830, gives some account of the Arthur Darley household at 5 Kildare Street, where they are to remain until Mr Guinness, possessed of desperate intent to marry, takes a wife. Frances and her mother are both semi-invalids.

'We have had quite a change of ministry in Kildare St since you left this. The King (of the Beggars) returned from France last October, but soon abdicated in favour of Mama . . . and becoming a second Cincin-

natus retired "where rumour of oppression and deceit might never reach him more" into the village of *Skreen* in the Co. Wexford—He is there turned farmer—tho' not on his own account Mr. Guinness has an estate there & my Father is amusing himself building a cottage on it and laying out the grounds for Mr Guinness—George, our Chargé d'Affaires in London, *is gone to France* on a secret and difficult mission, namely, *to amuse himself* If he succeed as well as we did, we shall create him minister of foreign affairs.—William is now in the Home Department, having returned to us early in May, & being of a very social disposition, he is, therefore, alternately Groom of the Bedchamber, Cabinet Counsellor & Father Confessor to us all—we have also dubbed him "Knight of the rueful countenance", as he never ceases complaining of the weeping skies of Ireland Darling Charlie (not a very diplomatic name you will allow) has been with us from March until the commencement of this month—while in town, *we* were all in the minority, he was Privy Counsellor & Comptroller General . . . How shall I describe our Prime Minister? Premier Henry. Canning, Machiavelli & Metternich were fools to him. The state flourishes nobly under his management—& he has the double advantage of being talented & popular. He is absent at present—having been in London since the 8th of May—he is putting in his terms at Lincoln's Inn. . . . A complete man of business at home & as studiously idle abroad—equally a Man of the World in the office or the drawing room—we miss him very much, for . . . he does not disdain also to be our jester & to talk nonsense with the silliest of us. . . .'

It was natural that Darley should desire to escape for a time from the scene of so many apparent failures. *The Errors of Ecstasie*, *The Labours of Idleness*, *Sylvia*, and *The New Sketch Book* had appeared and left him comparatively unknown The promise of his work in the *London Magazine* remained unfulfilled. But though the non-success of *Sylvia* had been a severe blow, he was conscious of his talents Though he was interested in mathematics, solid work in that science could not satisfy his ambition Travel and leisure might give him the impetus his mind needed. He was now thirty-five years old

IV

THE LYRIC POET

BEFORE we follow Darley abroad it will be well to discuss his scattered lyrical poetry. His work as a critic, it will be seen later, deserves to be remembered with gratitude. As a letter-writer he is interesting and distinguished, though he strikes one note too insistently. The letters quoted in this book are sufficient testimony to his quality in this art. If we except Keats and Byron, Beddoes alone among his contemporary poets surpasses him, and Beddoes, though rarely intimate, is with his curiously personal flavour almost one of the great letter-writers. Darley writes to his friends as he would have liked to talk, with easy fluency and a touch of abandon. It is from his letters and his criticism that we get our clearest view of the man and his attitude towards matters of moment. His literary fame, however, must rest chiefly on his poetry, and in that province it is by *Nepenthe* and the lyrics that he is best remembered. *Nepenthe* will be discussed in its place, the lyrics alone are in question here.

Here we are faced by incompleteness. The extant lyrics are, in the main, drawn from *The Labours of Idleness*, *Sylvia*, contributions to periodicals and annuals, and one manuscript, *Lenimuna Laborum*, first printed (with a few reservations and some additional poems) in 1890 for private circulation. This manuscript is written in 'Mem Book V'—the paper is watermarked 'W. Brookman 1828'—and almost certainly there were other books containing lyrics that have disappeared. It is, indeed, fortunate that this one, being out of his hands, did not share their fate. Therefore, since Darley's genius is essentially lyrical, it is well to bear in mind that our judgement of him as a lyric poet must be based on part only of his work.

His opinions on the work of his contemporaries were mainly unfavourable. Of Byron's poetry and influence he expressed disapproval; Keats and Shelley and Wordsworth, for different reasons, he regarded as dangerous models; and he had no love for poems on the affections and the domestic virtues. Some lines written in 1834 to Milnes, whom he regarded as a disciple of Wordsworth, give an idea of his own aim.

'Are you still preaching up Wordsworth? and writing in his style

sentimental pieces upon Go-Carts or Girandolas? Philosophical profundities dish-deep. Reflective poetry quoth 'a'—that reflects upon nothing but yourselves. Go your ways, and set beautiful thoughts to music, that 's the secret of true poetry, which nobody less than God can teach you to put in practice.'

Later, in 1836, Milnes is advised 'to follow nature instead of a Westmoreland dry-nurse. Consult the God within you, not an idol outside: observe the commandments of that, not the bleatings of this.' The praise of Tennyson's *St. Agnes* is significant:

'I caught a glimpse of the lustrous little thing . . . and crowed, being a better judge of jewels than corn Am I to take the Song as a palinode from his affected to a pure style? Let him go on in this way, & he will leave us all behind him—*as* I say, as if I had ever been abreast with him.'

To these statements may be added another (contained in his introduction to Beaumont and Fletcher) which R. H. Horne quoted as 'the finest theory ever yet broached on poetical rhythm'. It is part only of a suggestive discussion of the subject.

'Every true poet has a *song in his mind*, the notes of which, little as they precede his thoughts—so little as to seem simultaneous with them—do precede, suggest and inspire many of these, modify and beautify them. That poet who has none of this dumb music going on within him, will neither produce any by his versification, nor prove an imaginative or impassioned writer: he will want the harmonizer which attunes heart, and mind, and soul, the mainspring that sets them in movement together. Rhythm, thus, as an enrapturer of the poet, mediately exalts him as a creator, and augments all his powers. A good system of rhythm becomes, therefore, momentous both for its own sake to the reader, and because it is the poet's latent inspirer.'

These indications are perhaps sufficient to show what was Darley's ambition as a lyric poet. He wished to strike a more musical singing note than that of his contemporaries, a note that should escape the current sins of sentimentality, banality, and an excess of introspection. Tennyson perhaps, in his best poems up to 1842, did what Darley would have liked to do, though with an over-abundant richness. The models in the latter's mind—the poems of the Caroline lyrists—were less dated than Tennyson's work; they had more grace and freshness and, despite their conceits, a more melodious sobriety of phrase. The famous *It is not beauty I demande* does not stand alone among Darley's work in conscious and successful rivalry of Carew and his fellows. Of the other poems in this kind that show how delicate was his per-

ception of values and how exquisite his sense of rhythm and craft, the best is *Beautie's Triomphe* (*An Olden Song*)¹:

Dost thou love the blue to see
 In a boundless summer sky?²—
 Sweeter blue I'll show to thee
 In the orbit of an eye!
 Roses of the purest red
 Thou in every clime dost seek:
 I can show a richer bed
 In a single damask cheek!
 Thou wilt talk of virgin snow
 Seen in icy Norway land;
 Brighter, purer, I can show
 In a little Virgin hand!
 Still for glittering locks and gay³
 Thou wilt ever cite the Sun!
 Here 's a simple tress—I pray,³
 Hath he such a golden one?
 Choose each vaunted gem and flower
 That must, sure, with triumph meet,⁴
 Come then to my Beauty's bower,
 Come—and cast them at her feet!

There is nothing here quite so fine as

Tell me not of your starry eyes,
 Your lips that seem on roses fed,
 Your breasts where Cupid tumblings lies,
 Nor sleeps for kissing of his bed,

or certain other lines in *It is not beautie I demande*. But it has an individual excellence that no mere apprenticeship, however assiduous, could hope to produce. The note of aloofness from his age is a characteristic of all Darley's work, and again and again he touches, without apparent effort, strings that must have sounded strangely to contemporary ears.

But now, alas! that Love is old,
 Beauty may e'en lay down her lute;
 His wings are stiff, his heart is cold,
 He will not come and warble to't:

¹ First published in the *Athenæum* of 8 October 1836, with archaic spelling

² Still for splendor's yellow flare

³ Here 's a simple tress of hair,—

⁴ Crown of all that 's rich and meet These three variant lines are in the MS. of *Lennuma Laborum*, written in pencil above uncanceled lines

⁵ Not 'trembling', as often misquoted.

Or like a tottering tiny sire,
With false voice, and false-feathered wing,
Will only to a golden lyre,
And for a golden penny sing . . .
Now maids must sigh or smile alone,
Like roses in the desert bed;
Or bleed, on rocky bosoms thrown,
Or die,—for Love himself is dead!

Those are three stanzas from *Lament for Love*.¹ If Beddoes is held to plagiarize Tournour and Webster, and Mr. Robert Bridges the Elizabethan lyrists, then such things by Darley may be accounted imitations, but not otherwise. The explanation of kindred spirit is more satisfactory. This note is not foreign to Darley's work as a whole

The fact that Darley served an apprenticeship to earlier poets is evident in most of his work. It is natural for most poets to pass through such a stage. His apprenticeship, however, lasted, in a sense, all his life, and though the experience was of great service to him, the continued need for it betrays a weakness in his poetic equipment. Some palliatives for this state of affairs have already been advanced. At times, indeed, he flies triumphantly and almost to our amazement, with his own wings. But not for long. He loses faith in himself or virtue goes out of him, and the collapse is almost as astonishing as the flight. This gives to his work a curious unevenness. After the few perfect things have chosen themselves, other jewels hardly less precious have to be recovered from their unworthy settings. He was often a weak critic of his own work.

Part of this unevenness is no doubt due to his being a romantic idealist. He found it necessary to escape before creating. A poet dealing with actualities must also, of course, create, but it is not so easy for him to miss his aim completely. All Darley's lyric work is the pursuit of an ideal loveliness. For that reason, we think, he is particularly liable to error, and for that reason also he is likely at times to succeed greatly. The range of this work and its intellectual content is small. But, then, who shall measure lyrics by these things? Despite his efforts to free himself he is not able to avoid some of the weaknesses of his time. There is a vein of self-pity in his verse that often becomes unpleasantly lachrymose, and he can be as hazily sentimental as Barry Cornwall,

¹ *Athenaeum*, 22 April 1837

especially when writing of women. Allied to these faults is one into which he is betrayed by his metrical facility, the use of commonplace and almost vulgar rhythms that prance jauntily. In such a measure *The Green of the Day*,¹ which he was glad that Clare admired, is written—

Gentle Eve comes apace—gentle eve with a veil
Dew-besteep'd, that falls balm in a shower,
If its grey fleecy folds are but puffed by the gale
That would scarce move the wing of a flower

Yet these blemishes, disturbing though they are, belong in general to the perishable side of his work. At his best he has an authentic voice and tune of his own, depending in part on a carefully chosen and perfectly apt vocabulary, as remarkable for what it discards as for what it uses, avoiding excess of ornament, colour, and sentiment. Thence flows a gentle and delicately modulated music, suggesting the clearly defined silver notes of a lute and the green leaves on April willows.

Darley the apprentice poet can be seen in certain of the *Sylvia* lyrics, such as

O May, thou art a merry time,
Sing hi' the hawthorn pink and pale!
When hedge-pipes they begun to chime,
And summer-flowers to sow the dale.

The best evidence of the success attendant on the discipline he underwent is to be found in those six Syren Songs, published in *The Tribute*, 1837, which are all that survives (with the *Hymn to the Sun*) of what may well have been the most important of his manuscripts, *The Sea-Bride*. In them he reaches an individual imaginative plane with such certainty as to promise, had the work been finished, a small but distinguished masterpiece less faulty than *Sylvia*, yet like it standing alone. The cold flesh tints and the under-sea atmosphere are admirably and economically suggested. There is little that could be changed with advantage (except the marks of exclamation) in this dirge sung by mermen, called *The Sea-Ritual*:

Prayer unsaid, and mass unsung,
Deadman's dirge must still be rung
Dingle-dong, the dead-bells sound!
Mermen chant his dirge around!

¹ In *The Amulet* of 1827 not reprinted.

THE LYRIC POET

Wash him bloodless, smooth him fair,
 Stretch his limbs, and sleek his hair.
 Dingle-dong, the dead-bells go!
 Mermen swing them to and fro!

In the wormless sands shall he
 Feast for no foul gluttons be-
 Dingle-dong, the dead-bells chime!
 Mermen keep the tone and time!

We must with a tombstone brave
 Shut the shark out from his grave.
 Dingle-dong, the dead-bells toll!
 Mermen dirgers ring his knoll!

Such a slab will we lay o'er him
 All the dead shall rise before him!
 Dingle-dong, the dead-bells boom!
 Mermen lay him in his tomb!

Perfect also, in its way, is that syren chorus called *The Mer-maidens' Vesper-Hymn*.

Troop home to silent grotts and caves!
 Troop home! and mimic as you go
 The mournful winding of the waves
 Which to their dark abysses flow!

At this sweet hour, all things beside
 In amorous pairs to covert creep,
 The swans that brush the evening tide
 Homeward in snowy couples keep,

In his green den the murmuring seal
 Close by his sleek companion lies;
 While singly we to bedward steal,
 And close in fruitless sleep our eyes.

In bowers of love men take their rest,
 In loveless bowers we sigh alone!
 With bosom-friends are others blest,—
 But we have none! but we have none!

The Sea-Bride should have justified Darley's study of earlier writers, just as *Hassan* silenced doubts as to the wisdom of Flecker's apprenticeship. Both poets were essentially Romantics who, standing apart from their age, surrendered themselves to what may be called a Parnassian training.

Darley is, of course, a thorough-paced romantic. He cannot be claimed as an Irish poet, though he was at first influenced by

the slovenly fluency of Thomas Moore. His only attempt to be national, *The Flight of the Forlorn*, a long 'romantic ballad founded on the history of Ireland', is one of his less satisfactory productions. There are other poems, not generally known, that reveal his interest in romantic story. Some of these, *Merlin's Last Prophecy*¹ (a graceful compliment to the girl-queen Victoria) and *The Wildgrave's Song*,² are of small moment; others contain stanzas worth preservation, such as these from *Eglantine. or, The Emblem Flower*³

A moving glass the woodland water
At her feet unbroken spread;
In it the woodland's weeping Daughter
Saw another leafy shed
Tremble o'er her head.

She put the wan flower, all unweeting,
Bridal like, among her hair:
Lo! in the watery mirror fleeting,
Flower, and she more paly fair,
Drooped together there! . . .

There are others of note in the *Burial of the Last Baron*,⁴ and in *The Wedding Wake*.⁵

Pillow her in her bridal tire,
Her sandals at her feet;
No other dress doth she require,
Than a cold winding-sheet.

Coffin her up, and on the pall
Lay one white virgin plume;
As lone, as still, as spotless all,
She shall lie in the tomb.

We'll carry her o'er the churchyard green,
Down by the willow trees;
We'll bury her by herself, between
Two sister cypresses. . . .

But these things are, at best, partial successes

Perhaps the most characteristic, because the most completely his own, of all Darley's lyrics are those dealing with certain aspects of nature. He loved to write of sunny winds and running

¹ *Athenaeum*, 14 July 1838 (not reprinted)

² *Ibid.* 17 October 1835 (not reprinted).

³ *Ibid.* 2 November 1839 (not reprinted)

⁴ *Ibid.* 16 November 1839 (not reprinted)

⁵ *The Anniversary*, 1829 (not reprinted).

water, of birds and flowers and bees (for bees he has almost an obsession), placing them in a setting that has the gentle wildness of the Irish memories so dear to his heart. His method is far removed from that of his friend John Clare. He had nothing of Clare's master-love for country scenes and sounds, neither had he that poet's amazing truth and beauty of observation. His landscapes, partly because of the limits he set to his vocabulary, resemble one another closely. They are more suggested than described. Almost they become conventional. Yet they have a bright and delicate charm, and the atmosphere surrounding them is full of light and space. It is as difficult to pick out perfect things among these poems as it is elsewhere in Darley. Romantically sentimental stanzas often intrude to spoil what is well begun. But the fault is not in the workmanship, which is rarely anything but fastidiously certain. When the poet is seized by his subject the words chime with the happiest acquiescence.

The measure of perfection to which Darley bent his song in these poems can already be seen in certain of the *Sylvia* lyrics where a similar atmosphere is created. Osme's song to the assembled peasants, with its prelude, will serve as an example

Enter Osme above, playing on a lyre.

Stephana. Hark! hark! O hark! what measures play,
So sweet! so clear! yet far away!

Roselle. Whence is the music? who can say?

Jacintha 'Tis like the crystal sound of wells,
Betrampled by the sparkling rain!

Stephana Or dew-drops fal'n on silver bells
That tingle o'er and o'er again!

1st Girl 'Tis in the air!

2nd Girl. 'Tis under ground!

3rd Girl. 'Tis every where!

4th Girl. The magic sound!

All. Hush! O hush! and let us hear:

'Tis too beautiful to fear.

Osme sings and plays

Hither! hither!

O come hither!

Lads and lasses come and see!

Trip it neatly,

Foot it fealty,

O'er the grassy turf to me!

Here are bowers
 Hung with flowers,
 Richly curtain'd halls for you!
 Meads for rovers,
 Shades for lovers,
 Violet beds, and pillows too!
 Purple heather
 You may gather
 Sandal-deep in seas of bloom!
 Pale-faced lily,
 Proud Sweet-Willy,
 Gorgeous rose, and golden broom!
 Odorous blossoms
 For sweet bosoms,
 Garlands green to bind the hair;
 Crowns and kirtles
 Weft of myrtles,
 Youth may choose, and Beauty wear!
 Brightsome glasses
 For bright faces
 Shine in ev'ry rill that flows,
 Every minute
 You look in it
 Still more bright your beauty grows! . . .

Work of this kind, because it moves gracefully, looks deceptively easy. In reality it needs a poet, with an excellent ear. The macabre note in Beddoes was not more patiently sought for than this air of gentle wildness, musically rendered, that is typical of Darley. He wanders into a sweetly enchanted country, where enchanted waters sing as they flow.

O'er golden sands my waters flow,
 With pearls my road is paven white;
 Upon my banks sweet flowers blow,
 And amber rocks direct me right.
 Look in my mother-spring: how deep
 Her dark-green waters, yet how clear!
 For joy the pale-eyed stars do weep
 To see themselves so beauteous here
 Her pebbles all to emeralds turn,
 Her mosses fine as Nereid's hair,
 Bright leaps the crystal from her urn,
 As pure as dew, and twice as rare. . . .

Sometimes, though not often, it is Spring there.

The mountain winds are winnowing
 The primrose banks along,
 From bush to brake the wild birds sing;
 The runnel-brook sweet murmuring
 Thro' flowery meadows flush with Spring,
 Dances to his own song.

But usually it is Summer, with the sun 'high on his unpavilioned throne'. Then is the time for the poet to interpret the wild bee's tale and the song of the summer winds. When 'cloudless skies are golden blue' the season for roving down the glens and over the hills is come.

And we will see the Sun go down
 Behind the purple hills,
 While gem by gem her paly crown
 The Star of Beauty fills.
 When larks spring up to meet the light,
 When thrush and cuckoo chime,
 When flocks can sleep afiel by night,
 Then will be straying time!

From such a straying, one of his heroines, Lihan of the Vale, returns with her little jet of clear song:

I've been roaming! I've been roaming!
 Where the meadow dew is sweet,
 And like a queen I'm coming
 With its pearls upon my feet. . . .
 I've been roaming! I've been roaming!
 Where the honeysuckle creeps,
 And like a bee I'm coming
 With its kisses on my lips. . . .

This poetry has its dangers. Darley often fails to avoid the descent into mere prettiness.

He wrote about twenty sonnets, some of them irregular. It is not a form well suited to his genius, and he did not move easily in it. Leaving aside Keats and Shelley, he cannot approach, in his generation, the surprisingly vital sonnets of Clare, or those of the strangely neglected Thomas Wade, whose best book, *Mundi et Cordis: . . . Carmina* (1835), will one day be better known. Darley's sonnets do not march inevitably: they totter to their end. They are usually more personal than his other work, and

in that sense valuable, but they lack precision, and the reader often pauses to wonder how the theme of gentle melancholy is to be developed. Sometimes they start well:

Fair as the flower is, it will yet decay—
Green as the leaf is, it will yet be sere—
Night has a pall to wind the gaudiest day,
And Winter wraps in shrouds the loveliest year: . . .

or

'Twas in that pleasant season, when the year
Bursts into all the beauty of the Spring,

Sometimes, even, they end well, as this in which 'a lady who would sing only in the evening' is compared to a nightingale

Like her, the sweet Enchantress of the dell,
Thou wilt not sing until the stars arise;
And then, like her, for ever wilt thou dwell
On tender themes that drench sweet Pity's eyes.
Sure that old Samian fable sooth must be,
And some dead nightingale revives in thee!¹

None of Darley's sonnets, then, is completely satisfactory, and, since they all contain noteworthy lines, none is negligible. The most distinctive are one written in 1825 beginning 'While the Moon decks herself in Neptune's glass', and the following *To Herva*:

As the brook's song that lulls the quiet lawn,
As meadowy music heard on mountains high,
As cherubs' hymns sung in the ear of Dawn
When the entranced stars go lingering by,—
So sweet to me is thy sweet voice, my Love!
It seems as if thy bosom, all too weak
To utter the rude murmur of a dove,
Were framed almost too delicate to speak:
Hast thou a little lyre hung in thy breast,
Thy fine heart-strings weft for its slender chords?
Methinks, so sweetly are thy thoughts exprest,
'Tis it that makes the music of thy words
Even in thy tones that are or would be gay,
Joy melts for very gentleness away.²

¹ Another, and inferior, version of this sonnet was printed in *The Anniversary*, 1829.

² This is the version printed in the *Athenaeum* of 6 July 1839. The MS *Lenumina Laborum* contains another. There line 5 is cancelled for 'So sweet the tremulous voice of her I love', line 12 has 'this' for 'it', and the last line, of which there are several variants, reads 'The sigh-swept lyre but seems at melancholy play'. This sonnet, and that quoted in part above, were addressed to his cousin Maria Darley.

In the history of prosody Darley, with Beddoes, takes an honoured place. Mr. Saintsbury, in his *History of Prosody*, after disclaiming any intention to assess his general poetic worth, says, 'It is enough for me that, if we were to judge by the prosodic value of bits and scraps of his which could be produced by dozens, he would rank among the magicians,' and not far below the craftiest of them.' When all Darley's faults have been admitted there remain 'things unquestionable by any one who can get to the point of seeing them face to face as examples of verse' English poetry in the nineteenth century did not, indeed, have to await the advent of Tennyson for the revelation of exquisitely ordered musical rhythm. The quotations that have been made from the lyrics in *The Labours of Idleness* and *Sylvia* show this unmistakably. Many others might be added to them, such as *The Maiden's Grave* and the movement of Sylvia's song.

O sweet to rove
The wilds we love,
Soft glade, smooth valley, and mountain steep,
Ere birds begin
Their morning din,
Bright sun abed, and bright flowers asleep . .

A place must be found for one of his happiest discoveries, the measure of the *Serenade of a Loyal Martyr*,¹ which anticipates, if it did not suggest, Meredith's *Love in the Valley*:

Sweet in her green cell the Flower of Beauty slumbers,
Lulled by the faint breezes sighing thro' her hair,
Sleeps she, and hears not the melancholy numbers
Breathed to my sad lute amid the lonely air?

Down from the high cliffs the rivulet is teeming
To wind round the willow banks that lure him from above
O that in tears from my rocky prison streaming,
I too could glide to the bower of my love!

Ah! where the woodbines with sleepy arms have wound her
Opes she her eyelids at the dream of my lay,
Listening like the dove, while the fountains echo round her,
To her lost mate's call in the forests far away?

Come, then, my Bird!—for the peace thou ever bearest,
Still heaven's messenger of comfort to me,
Come!—this fond bosom, my faithfullest, my fairest!
Bleeds with its death-wound, but deeper yet for thee.

¹ *Athenæum*, 23 January 1836.

Chorley, in the appreciative account of Darley written for the *Athenæum* after the latter's death, expressed the opinion that modesty was a bar to the richly deserved recognition of one who 'ought to stand high among the poets of his time'. There may be a little truth in this contemporary explanation, and certainly the poet's appeal was lessened by the comparative inaccessibility of his work.¹ But Darley's poetry could never have been popular. For that reason his reputation, upheld by the few, has not had to contend with the reaction that follows excessive lip-service. He is, in a sense, a poet's poet. His best work is beyond the reach of time and fashion. If poets must still be measured by the foot-rule let him be called a small classic. For a classic he is, indisputably

¹ Till 1897 *Nepenthe* was known, even to the curious, only from the extracts printed by Miss Mitford in her *Recollections of a Literary Life* (1852)

V. 1831-1835

Paris. Rome. Letters from Rome, Florence, Munich to the 'Athenæum'.
Letters to Cunningham, Henry Darley, Procter, Milnes, Cary.
'Nepenthe'.

AFTER his departure from England it is from Paris that we next hear of Darley. There his artist brother William was already living, and there, too, was a branch of the family that spelt its name D'Arley with which he became acquainted. William Darley, a man of fine taste and delicate genius, was too sensitive and self-critical to produce much. For many years he lived a secluded life in Paris, worried by ill health and dallying with art rather than working at it. He made few friends. Later he was an occasional contributor to the *Athenæum*. He died at Fontainebleau in July 1857. The two brothers were, it is evident, strangely alike in temperament and want of physical vigour, and, though they were friendly, to that similarity is probably due the absence of a stronger bond between them. There is little about William in his brother's surviving correspondence, and no mention of him in the following interesting letter to Cunningham.

(To Allan Cunningham)

Paris, May 22, 31.

My dear Allan,

I cannot well devote a canonical hour to a more sacred office than that of fulfilling a duty long owed to a friend. There is in fact so much to be seen, heard, read, and recorded here by a visitor who may never return that he has little time to write idle letters such as the present. For, my dear Fellow! I cannot let you into one secret of state. We are all political prattleboxes here, it is true, but communicate so vast a quantity of knowledge that we have leisure to receive none. It is like all the winds of the horizon met together in a cave, and all puffing their souls out to catch other faces, yet not one being able to draw in a breath of air. Like them, too, we are exhaustless tho empty, and inflated, tho having only to look big at a shipwreck. . . .

Now let me speak of something much nearer my heart and yours. So we are about to lose the divinest particle of Himself which God has breathed into the nostrils of this generation—it has, perhaps before my letter tells you I lament it, become reincorporated with Supreme Intelligence. What a desolate race we shall be when he² is gone! Miserable

² The reference is obscure, such praise by Darley of a living writer is extremely rare. Possibly Coleridge, who was in failing health, is meant. He did not

Pagans when our Delphic Oracle has ceased! Well, he descends like the Summer-Sun in full blazon, covered with the glory he himself has wrought into the world. He sinks in time too!—we are fast becoming a set of mechanical utility-mongers whom mock-suns and moon-calves, satellites and stars of the seventh magnitude, will be quite good enough to enlighten

How do other affairs proceed in England? I do not mean as to breaking up constitutions, or laying out grounds for the new Utopia—I have as little interest in such things as acquaintance with their merits—but as to the Arts not political. Have your last two volumes succeeded as well as they ought? I read them with pleasure only inferior to that which the first two afforded me.¹ Your Blake is the only thing better than your Flaxman, and your Hogarth than your Nollekens. I don't enter into a laboured critique of these little books, because you would rather have it in [on?] ten lines of your poetry. They are clever adequate things, and even were they more would be Albert Durers for beetle-eyed judges—Symphonies of Heaven for those who can relish nothing better than Lillibullero. You throw in a spice now and then for high-seasoned palates, just to show how rich you could make the dish if all who tasted were epicures, instead of the majority being beefeaters. What I would give for your talent and the Messiah's of 'checking your thunder in mid-volley'—my little brimstone-flashes either set the object in a fume, or don't affect at all. When you know this, villain! what do you talk to me about Magazining? Unless I give myself as much trouble as would produce a fifth gospel, my essay is not worth a chapter of Generations.

By the by, is it too late to ask for our friend Kennedy's periodical? He seemed too free-spirited a fellow for an editor. I see a volume of poems advertised with his name.² Does anyone read verses now in England besides those of the Bible? Indeed I often say what a superfluous set of people we are, you, I, K., etc. etc. to write poetry when there is so much of it in print unread. Ay, and of better than the pick of us could execute if our brains were beaten together. Have you ever read Webster? Why, my good Sir! there are passages in 'Vittoria Corombona' almost worthy of the Angel Gabriel. Don't mind what Campbell says—his criticism upon this author is nearly as strong evidence

die till 1834. The phrase 'Delphic Oracle' can hardly apply to Scott, who had a stroke about a month before Darley wrote, and died in 1832

¹ The first volume of Cunningham's *Lives*, published in 1829, includes a study of Hogarth, and the second (1830) one of Blake. The third volume (1830) was devoted to sculptors, including Nollekens and Flaxman, and the fourth (1831) to architects.

² Bertram Dobell suggested that the reference is to Charles Rann Kennedy (Trinity College, Cambridge), well known as a barrister, but his book, *Poems, Original and Translated*, was not published till 1843. Perhaps William Kennedy, who contributed to Cunningham's *Anniversary*, is meant. He was the editor of *The Continental Annual* published in 1832. That would account for the periodical mentioned.

against his own poetical genius as the 'Pleasures of Hope' is in favour of it. There are passages in that play every whit as good as—No! deuce take it that would be too bad!—but every whit as good as—damn it! that won't do either!—Well, Shakespeare and Milton excepted, there is poetry in Webster *superior* to that of any other English Author. If you have not 'The White Devil' by heart, get it.

To be sure it is a dead letter to the mob of readers, tho written as plain as a proclamation. But it is *not* a proclamation, and therefore they cannot understand it. Indeed they could not if they were promoted to the minds they will have in Heaven. Travesties on the Bible are more to their taste—field-preaching bellowed forth in pentameters—Then there is Andrew Marvel! have you read Andrew Marvel? Diamonds buried in dust.

Any more rapes on the Muses committed since I heard from you? Any more abortions or monsters?—Are you doing anything in the legitimate way yourself? Or are you disposed to let the present bad times go by (perhaps to bring worse)?—As to my own works on hand, my number is nearly that of the Beast. I interpolate comedy with romance, and clap a sonnet into the heart of a tragedy, relieving my philosophy with a few odd rhymes, and my lay-sermons with a bacchanalian. My romance has progressed farther than anything else, but I shall be a year licking it into bearable form. I have gone picture-mad—'tis odds but you see your poor friend one of these days a virtuoso!

How is Mrs. Cunningham? does she still persist in her foolish trick of making her friends happy round her fireside and supper-table?—I am afraid she is horribly given to poets, and they are the next things to distillers of cherry brandy.

I have written to Joseph,¹ but indeed fear he has already far outstript the advice I gave him to direct his progress. There will be no bearing you, I suppose, when he rides home from Bombay on an elephant. Will Mrs. Jean be satisfied with the 'grass for a cow' then? No I warrant! She will drive four in hand thro Dumfries, and the Marquis of Annandale may think himself well off to dress and curry her equipage—Remember me to any who don't forget me.—Yours ever and ever sincerely,

G. D.

Despite the natural disgust with the reading public and its favourites, and the ever-recurring doubt that troubles most writers, it is easy to see that here is a man whose whole being was devoted with enthusiasm to literature and art, both as maker and critic. His delight in Webster and Marvell (strange that 'John Lacy' should discover Webster so late) is fresh and convincing. More important is the confession of literary activity. We shall never know, in all likelihood, what happened to the

¹ A son of Allan Cunningham already mentioned

romance and the other works, whether they were finished or why they were not published. The 'bacchanalian' mentioned may refer to the beginnings of *Nepenthe*. But their ultimate fate did not concern Darley when he was busied with them. His mind, released from routine discipline, had recovered its poise; his intellectual curiosity was alert to adventure in new pastures. The letter is written by a man on the way to regain confidence in himself. One sentence, 'I have gone picture-mad', is packed with meaning. For the next year or two there is little news of Darley, though a number of unimportant contributions in a magazine, *The Original* of 1832, may be his. That time he no doubt devoted to poetry and to acquiring, chiefly in France and Italy, a knowledge of painting and artists that was to make him one of the most considerable art critics of his day.

In a letter of January 1833, from Cornelius Harrison to Charles West Cope, there is a mention of William Darley who 'has *locked himself up for three weeks*, and has not been seen by any living soul. I believe some young lady with whom he was in love is dead. Who would have thought that such a grey-headed fellow had so much sentiment?' Commenting on this letter in his *Reminiscences*, Cope says that he became friends with William, a diligent but unsuccessful artist of fine taste living high upstairs in solitude, when he was in Paris, and he describes a humorous meal that he once had with him at the ridiculous boarding-house where William dined. Then he goes on:

'Darley and his two brothers afterwards came to Rome. All were clever men. The eldest, George, was a mathematician and an excellent poet. They were all of feeble health. If they dined on boiled turkey, they were well; if on roasted, all were ill! They wore thick list shippers over their shoes, but could not keep warm. George Darley was an art critic, and one day asked me how I liked a certain picture by Salvator Rosa. I told him "Not much". "Then" said he, "I'm sssorry for you!" A poem he wrote was called "Sylvia". It was published by a book seller to the University of London in Gower St. I went there and asked for it. The young man said he had never even heard of it. I persisted. At length another person found a copy in the warehouse, covered with dirt. Evidently it had not been in great request. I was delighted with it. George Darley used to visit me occasionally and criticise what I painted, —I thought then severely; I do not think so now.'

From Paris Darley went to Italy, and in November 1832 set out from Florence to Rome, whence he wrote an extremely long

letter to his uncle Henry Darley, of the Grange, Stillorgan. This is mainly concerned with an elaborate description of the city's buildings and monuments, with some account of the people and their customs, written for the entertainment of one who was content to be a stay-at-home.

(To Henry Darley, Esq , of Stillorgan
Care of Messrs. Guinness and Co ,
5 Kildare Street, Dublin, Ireland)

Rome,
16 February 1833.

My dear Uncle,

With every disposition to write you an agreeable letter, I never found myself so unequal to such a task. Four friends lost within one year makes me think myself in the Valley of the Shadow of Death, & contract a gloominess of spirit only fit for such a place. I had delayed till a few weeks' residence at Rome might enable me to give you a sketch of what would probably interest you more than any other from my Tour, when the account of my sister Fanny's death came to paralyse me altogether; & the shock was severer as having seen little of her since childhood I did not know that her health menaced so premature a fate. However it is needless to lament one who has perhaps gone but a short way before me. . . .

At Rome then, where I rather wished than ever hoped to be, I find myself—chiefly by the aid of your present, my dear Uncle, as I could scarce have proceeded on my own slender means beyond Florence. You may guess with what anguish I had beheld every sunset the clouds that glittered over the 'Eternal City', reflecting as it were the splendour of its hundred domes in their hues, yet felt myself unable to enter it tho' but a redbreast's flight from the Arno: you may therefore judge of my gratification at receiving the *golden key* to this paradise of travellers. Nevertheless I was prevented setting out till late in November, oddly enough by the *fineness* of the weather—most Italian roads being inconvenient to travel at this season till drenched by rains that would render English impassable. To the Papal State, in particular, *malaria* seems as much attached as if it were an exhalation from his Holiness—Rome itself must be inundated to become habitable. The road thither is little interesting except to geologists, as it lies for the most part between immense tracts of volcanic land where sulphur, chalk & mineral earths, kill vegetation. As far as the Tuscan limits however, Florentine neatness & comfort reminded me of our own (I do not mean Irish). *Siena* is a pretty, quiet town (perhaps because half untenanted), with a small Gothic cathedral of exquisite architecture & decoration. I could willingly have spent two months, instead of two short hours, admiring its walls hallowed by the genius of Raffael, and its still richer floor of white

marble laid out in mosaics almost equal to the paintings. Beyond *Siena* the soil becomes wretched, as well as the tiller of it, yet both having an air of bleak cheerfulness about them, & the latter apparently retaining his Tuscan disposition to be as honest as convenience will allow him. . . At *Acquapendente* where you enter the States of the Church begin dishonesty, desolation, & dirt . . . Ireland is not the only sample of ill-government on the face of the globe. . . .

If you wish to see the interesting costume peculiar to the Roman women, look in the printshops—it is not to be found anywhere else. . . . Those who could afford to be picturesque prefer being *fashionable*: instead of the white veil folded flat upon the head wear French mobs, and substitute cotton frocks for the red embroidered jacket and the variegated petticoats. Something of romance however remains among the clowns, in their peaked hats, garters of buckled leather, and cloaks of olive brown which they throw over their left shoulder with an air between that of a consul and a drawcansir¹. They are shepherds nevertheless whom you would rather meet in a city than in a sequestered vale were it ever so Arcadian.

Of course you expect the streets of Rome at night to be an orchestra of guttars, a sweet jangle of dulcimers, mandolins, serenades & love-songs. No Sir! but the *bagpipe*—by all that is odious & Irish, nothing save the bagpipe eternally puffing addresses to the one only Virgin we hear of at Rome—this is the sole minstrelsy that regales you. Like the beauty of a Roman milkmaid however it is interesting at a distance: nay when heard afar off sounding thro' the long green aisles that lead into this labyrinth of ruins it becomes expressively wild & romantic. It is not just the *Pat-Murphy* pipe of Ireland, but the strictly classic—denominated *cornmuse*—with a respectable *sack* of wind instead of a housekeeper's pocketful, & a tone more reedy than *skirling*. Nevertheless I have heard better Italian music at Paris or London than in Italy. I have not gone to the theatres here—but their opera singers are of no reputation, or rather an ill one: the best would only be stars at the Rotunda. . . .

Proceeding farther into the chief seat of Ancient Rome you find it almost a perfect solitude. groves of cane-reed twelve feet high, arid knolls, patches of withered garbage, here & there a half cultivated vineyard, form a scene that may be entitled the beau-ideal of desolation, stretching to the city walls. Yet this is far the most interesting part of Rome—at least to me who am somewhat of a daydreamer. Here are the Temples, Aqueducts, Baths, Tombs, etc., lying in all their enormity of ruin. It would be impossible to designate them, not to say describe, in the compass of a letter. I must refer you to a volume that may probably see the light, if I can acquire sufficient knowledge of them during my short stay. . . .

¹ A blustering bully in Buckingham's *Rehearsal*.

Do what I can to condense, a description of Rome is as impossible in one sheet as to write the Psalms on a sixpence. I have said nothing of the statues and the pictures. yet the former . . . are commoner than milestones in many parts of Ireland, while there are numberless collections of the latter which would each make a National Gallery for England. . . . But I must have done. My Volume must be bound by a cooper to contain all I have to say on these subjects—I could rave of them for ever. Isolated as I am & always must be, such mute tho' eloquent companions are my only society. Indeed did my circumstances permit, I should pass my life I believe in travelling Europe to form a dumb acquaintanceship with all the Beauties of Nature & of Art, tho' I should lie down to utter silence in the arms of my mother-land at last. But I have only two months more to spend here, with full employment for twelve. I must exchange the Forum for *Paternoster Row*, having borrowed too much already during my long stay on the Continent. I hope indeed to turn my acquisitions to some account, unless weeds be all such a rolling stone has gathered among so many paths of moss. . . .

In pity to whoever is condemned to read this hieroglyphic epistle I must at length conclude—but recollect in my excuse that writing is the only way by which I can communicate freely and unpainfully with those I love

Yours my dear Uncle sincerely & affectionately,
George Darley.

The personal note in this letter is one of melancholy. The poet dwells on Springfield, the scene dearest to his remembrance. In a postscript he wishes those at 5 Kildare Street to know that he shall want his March remittance in full, and there are references to the remittances of other months. It is plain, however, that his new interests attract him deeply. Two friends at least he met during this stay in Rome, Cary and his son Francis. They recognized and hailed him as he was hurrying along near the Colosseum, and after that meeting he was much in their company during March and April. Together they made excursions outside Rome, visited the studios of Severn and Gibson, heard the *Miserere* in St. Peter's, and admired the illuminations of Clovio Giulio in a manuscript of the *Paradiso*. When he went to Naples Cary took a letter of introduction from Darley to Julius Hare, best known at that day, perhaps, as the translator (with Connop Thirlwall) of Niebuhr's *History of Rome*, though the anonymous *Guesses at Truth*, of which he was chief author, was published in 1827.

We are unable to determine how long Darley stayed in Rome in this year. In a letter to Cary, dated 9 September 1833, Lamb

says, 'I will take my time with Darley's act. I wish poets would write a little plainer; he begins some of his words with a letter which is unknown to the English typography.' This 'act' is unrecognized; it was probably entrusted to Cary because the author was still away from England. Darley tells us that he passed through Florence in the autumn of 1833. On 1 December he invites Cary to come and take an oyster with him at his London club. The note, which carried no year, is endorsed by Cary 'Dec 1st/33'. If that is correct the plans he had outlined to his uncle were altered and his stay in England was short. He was again in Rome in January 1834 acting as correspondent to the *Athenæum*.

An undated letter to Procter, acknowledging a book, perhaps belongs to this hurried English visit. Procter, whose future in literature seemed bright and assured in the early twenties, had for some years past abandoned verse-writing 'for graver, and (to him) more important occupations'—those of barrister and Commissioner of Lunacy; but he retained his interest in letters and was an excellent friend to many a writer from Beddoes to Swinburne. Carlyle's summing up of him 'a decidedly rather pretty little fellow, bodily and spiritually', though too Olympian, contains a deal of truth.

(To B W Procter.)

[No address or date.]

My dear Procter,

I hardly thank you for your book²; it puts me quite out of conceit with my own verses. That Hogarthian piece I was afraid would fail, is most successful; the last stanza (often so lame) crowns all. I am a lazzarone of a reader, but have read enough of your *Scrapiana Dramatica* to see their merit. Why not complete a drama? Experience confirms me more and more in the opinion that a poetic whole is far greater than all its parts unconnected; to build it up well, forms the true basis of fame. You must not retail away your stock of dramatic ideas. It was felicitous ill-luck that the other proofs went through the devil's hands! I spoil all my verses by corrections, and am glad you didn't adopt those I had the

² This is, perhaps, *English Songs and Other Small Poems* (Moxon, 1832), the small poems being seventy-four dramatic fragments, which sufficiently account for Darley's '*Scrapiana Dramatica*'. Procter's works came with a rush—*Dramatic Scenes* (1819), *Marcian Colonna* (1820), *A Sicilian Story* (1820), *Mirandola* (1821), *Poetical Works* (1822), *The Flood of Thessaly* (1823)—and then there was pause. None of these seems to be in question. Darley can hardly refer to Procter's first book (so curiously overpraised by Lamb), nor does the letter read like that of a literary apprentice. But he forgets or ignores *Mirandola* 'Hogarthian' is a strange adjective for any of Procter's work. His bacchanalian songs are quite innocent of alcohol. Darley may refer to *The Song of the Outcast* or *The Convict's Farewell*.

presumption to offer One corrects in such cold blood. The Queen Anne's men were alone good correctors¹ As the Russians rub snow to cure their frozen noses, frigid writers may be ameliorated by frigid critics.

Any Sunday morn (or other) you like, come and breakfast, I am always 'socially disposed' towards you. Drop me a line to expect you, but *don't ask me*.

Ever, in all kindness, yours,

George Darley

We return to the *Athenæum*. This weekly review, started in January 1828 by James Silk Buckingham (a stormy petrel from India who wrote several books of travel), soon passed into the hands of Charles Wentworth Dilke as editor and part proprietor. With him were associated some members of the old *London Magazine* group, Hood, Allan Cunningham, and John Hamilton Reynolds, who retained an interest in the review even when it was in Dilke's sole control. They vigorously protested against his forward policy of reducing the price and, later, increasing the number of pages; but the changes were successful. Dilke was an excellent editor, and under his direction the *Athenæum* soon became famous for its unprejudiced criticism and independence. He resigned in 1846 to become manager of the already languishing *Daily News*.

That Darley should be associated with the *Athenæum* was therefore natural. He had friends who were of influence on the only kind of paper he could conscientiously serve. No doubt he saw, when he returned to England, that he could use his experiences in Rome, and at the same time extend his knowledge of art, by writing a series of letters from that city on matters of general interest. He desired, moreover, to see the treasures gathered in the other capitals of Europe, and this plan made that wish possible. His income was too small to allow him to travel without some means of earning money. In this way he gained, with a sufficiency, opportunities to continue his education as critic and some leisure for his creative work. Unfortunately it was not only a question of travel. His visits abroad, after 1834, became oases in a reviewer's life. Darley was never completely dependent on his own efforts for a living, and so happily had not to answer to the inexorable whip of journalism. But his work as reviewer, though on congenial subjects, was task enough. He dealt mainly with plays,¹ editions of classics, and books on art. Such writings,

¹ We are told, in the memoir prefixed to a selection of Dilke's writings, that 'in the early days of the *Athenæum* its dramatic criticism was entrusted to George

with his letters from abroad, occasional papers, notes on exhibitions, and, later, on picture sales, make up the body of prose work that he was contributing to the *Athenæum* till his death in 1846.

His first letter from Rome is dated January 1834, and he stayed there, writing comments, until the summer heats drove him to Florence. He is not concerned only with the buildings and galleries, paintings and frescoes. These things were comparatively well known in England by the only people likely to be interested, and when he mentions them it is usually to jot down judgements contrary to those current at the time. They are the reconsiderations of a student of Sir Joshua's *Discourses* whose taste is often at variance with his authority. Modern work interests him too, though he has not much praise to bestow on artists who try to run before they can walk. That is one of his reiterated complaints. Severn, who can almost achieve a work of poetic imagination in his *Ancient Mariner*, must needs attempt to chain the great Dragon in an altar-piece for Cardinal Weld and does it as if he were putting jesses on a tercel-gentle. Yet 'enthusiasm is the leaping-pole of genius—worldly success the walking-staff' he has both, so gets forward without stop'. He visits the ascetic Overbeck at the Palazzo Cenci, and the studio of Gibson, who has been wrestling 'with his twelve-hundred pound *Huskisson*; the match was scarce equal, for you know the sculptor is rather one of our light weights. He is a sort of spiritual Jack Randall, the nicest finisher, and when he gets a body into chancery, after a special pommelling, gives it a *coup de grâce* that excites admiration through the whole ring'. As for Thorwaldsen's new world of whites at Piazza Barberini wrought 'in that same whity-blue marble that gives one the shivers like the sight of London milk of a winter's morning'—it is an exhibition for Pizarro. 'In his wilderness of creatures bursting alive from blocks of marble, one thinks of the Heathen Flood, when men grew out of stones, and is about to call him a second Deucalion. He has begotten another *Horse*, big enough to hold a squadron of cuirassiers within, and the Colossus of Rhodes without.' *The Arabs* by Horace Vernet, head of the French school, a picture that excites general admiration, revolts

Darley and Charles Dance'. This does not mean that Darley wrote the weekly dramatic criticism, though he may have dealt with the performance of an occasional play. He reviewed certain published plays by Talfourd and Lytton, and added to his reputation for truculence. His colleague, Chorley, speaks of him as taking up, on his return to London in 1835, the 'position of dramatic reviewer—not critic to the hour'.

him by its cold colouring and clayey touch. Worst of all is the exhibition of the Roman Academy

'Alas' it is like the offspring of Rollo pirouetting at Almack's, the grandchildren of Charlemagne wasting all their lives at ombre! Sig^r *Thus*, paints a little girl with a posy, Sig^r *That*, a view of the Colosseum, with a sentry and his box for the historical part of the composition, . . . not half so ingeniously insignificant are these artists, as fleas drawing carriages'

Not only does Darley inveigh against the sterility of the modern Romans in the fine arts As a people he finds them utterly despicable, a rank amalgam of many nations, barbaric, ignorant, gross, and slothful, with as much interest in enlightenment as a nation of Calibans, and with ferocity, as distinct from courage, for their distinctive characteristic. For him the most fallen thing in Rome is the national character, hence the exaggerated picture of degradation that he paints To go from Tuscany into the Papal States is like passing from brightness into darkness—contented industry and native good humour give place to envious sloth and ever-needy cunning. Guess, he says, what the Papal States must be, with their robber-law, when on reaching the Austrian you feel yourself at ease. But he points out that his censure is directed against the Romans, not against the fine-looking peasant people, often seen in the city, whose faults of sloth and ignorance are to be charged to their misrulers.

'Tyranny long, terror now, is to be considered as the source of so much evil government Not Ætna and Vesuvius alone,—the whole Apennine is a chain of volcanoes; smothered indeed, but ready for simultaneous out-burst, while the land sickens and shudders in the stomach as it feels the commotion roll below Legitimacy sits upon the mere crust of destruction. You may imagine the trouble it must have, keeping down earthquakes! and by lying on that thin layer too with all its weight, when there is such a gulf of perdition beneath! Verily I should not be surprised, odd as it might sound, to hear that the greatest *quaker* in Italy were the Pope himself! I've been told of a political nostrum, much in favour with the French *juste-milieu*,—to make his Majesty of Sardinia, as a preventive of republicanism in Italy, profess himself liberal, lead up the maze of revolution, and so place himself at the head of the Italian people, as their deliverer and dictator. You know I am a mere piddler in the game of politics; but 'twould seem as if Jean Grenouille were playing some hand of this sort at Naples, which he had probably shown without success at Turin. Now, if Italy free herself in a hundred years or so, remember who told you! . . .

Darley has no higher opinion of the Roman archaeologist than he has of the artists. He makes one exception—Sarti. For the rest 'a tile supplies occupation for a twelvemonth to the most vivacious member'. The only archaeologists that matter in Rome are the Germans, and it is they who have undertaken a worthy description of the city that shall supersede such inefficient guides as Vasi, Nibby, and Starke. Darley praises the erudition and honesty of the Germans, and advises Englishmen to take a lesson from them in conscientiousness. They are, nowadays, 'the pioneers and field-m Marshals of literature'. Bunsen, the Prussian Minister at Rome, who knew and appreciated Darley, is for him the most remarkable man now in Italy. Not only is he interested in archaeology, but he whips up every fine picture going and packs it off to Prussia, a country fortunate and most judicious in her choice of political agents. 'What mighty strides to prosperity must not be made by that Kingdom, which can reckon among its subordinate ministers such men as Humboldt, Niebuhr, and Bunsen?' And when, he asks, will the British representative acquire some of the same interests?

The Carnival of 1834 was, owing to the papal indulgence, a triumph of merriment compared with the gloomy festival of the previous year. It was attended by an unusually large number of English people, among whom was the young and brilliant Richard Monckton Milnes, not long down from 'Apostolic' Cambridge, fresh from his tour in Greece with Christopher Wordsworth and the book, his first, that had resulted from it. It is probable that Darley met this attractive man, whose genius for happy friendship has been rivalled by few, in Rome, at this time. Two undated notes, one addressed to 'Dear Trochee and Spondee' from 'Anti-Hexameter' and the other (given below)¹ adorned with a portrait of Momus and mathematical symbols, point to this year. The two men were certainly acquainted later in the year at Munich. They became friends; Lord Houghton indeed, in 1881, though:

¹ To R. M. Milnes, Esq

[No address or date]

Dear Tramontane,

I enclose you these lest you might think me coy. If they don't choak you perhaps you'll have stomach for my 'Life of the Grave' *

Yours,

Litherwit.

Will you call on me tomorrow at 2, and walk out to Villa Albani?

* Unknown.

of writing Darley's life, but unfortunately never made the attempt. The contrast between the two in 1834 was striking—Darley old and delicate for his forty years, an unsocial and almost a disillusioned man, Milnes gay, whimsical, 'full of blarney and quizz' (to use the words of Carlyle), accustomed to shine in society, a nature rich in possibilities on the threshold of his career. Surely a couple so ill-assorted was not fated to tread the masque of folly in company? If not together, then at least they were part of the same riotous crowd. Milnes paid visits and walked about in white muslin and a blue satin toque. Darley was, on his own confession, not one of the least remarkable of the *lusus naturae*, he and R. 'walked through the motley assemblage, somewhat like a *megatherion* arm in arm with an *ormithorhyncus paradoxus*' He has left a vivacious account of a scene that embraced every character between a priest and a naked Cyprian, and kept Rome at the crowing-point of exultation for a week. But the gaiety for him was hollow.

'Nothing was strange but a rational creature Here stood a bear whispering soft nonsense into a lady's bonnet, there, a German with whiskers brought over his back like pig-tails, dishevelled mane, and ravine of teeth, unconsciously looking the ogre. This carriage was driven by a fat cook-maid—that loaded with three powdered baboons by way of footmen—t'other filled with half-a-dozen Grand Turks or Indian squaws. Now the Senator (Prince Orsini) drove up in his gilt coach, as big with the majesty of his station, as if he had swallowed a board of aldermen, now six whole troopers rode down at a high trot, fire in their eyes, and flaming swords in their hands, to announce, as they gallantly cleared the street, that the ponies might canter to the Capitol. A park of two great guns proclaimed the victor, and awed the populace. "Mighty Rome" ancora! huzza!—The Corso looked for all the world like a ward of mad millers in the moon, hustling about through clouds of meal-dust to the tune of visionary millstones. . . .

'But when all 's said and done, to see the Carnival in perfection, you must see it in a London print-shop the thing itself is low, squalid, and uproariously dull; stable-boys and strumpets are the chief masqueraders: imagine the populace of St Giles's buying their fancy dresses at Rag Fair, and tumbling draggle-tail heigh-for-O'Connell through the Strand—little better than this You'll hear more wit, and not half so much noise about it, at Bartholomew Fair in half an hour, than here in a whole Carnival. . . .'

He has, however, the grace to add that it was good-humoured and harmless hurly-burly. If any blow were given it was probably

by an Englishman whose dignity was outraged. The happenings in Holy Week please him no more than the Carnival. He recommends Lady Morgan's tales as much more animated and rapturous than the reality. The twelve priests whose feet were 'washed' had all the appearance of having been well scraped and scalded for the ceremony, whereas in the church were no few gentry whose feet it would have been a real penance to make clean. The papal waiting at dinner was but another count in the hypocritical mummery, 'as disgusting to me in one religion as another'. The only things appropriate to so solemn an occasion were, for him, the *Miserere*, and the music by Palestrina, insufficiently known across the Alps. As one who detests Rossini and 'the canary-bird school' in church, he delights in the noble music. 'Next to fiddles in an organ-loft, I do hold in utter abomination this whiffing, capering, claptrap music in a choir.'

An English tourist's remarks on a fresco by Guido give him an opportunity of girding at the prevailing taste for Teniers and Adriaen van Ostade. It is not so much an indictment of realism as a statement of his belief that other styles of painting deserve more attention. To this subject he often returns.

'Wonderfully our national taste in the fine arts seems to be exalted by such crowds of us travelling for improvement into Italy. Contemplating, the other day, at the Rospighosi palace, Guido's famous "Aurora" in fresco, a large, breast-buttoned English gentleman, with as much blubber about his cheeks as a whale, and his dry ruddy face so whitened by pomatum as to look like powdered beef, observed to his friend, in the *haw-haw* tone of country justiceship—"Grand defect, sir! grand defect of the picture—cattle *without traces*! Not nature, sir! cattle never draw without traces! grand defect!"—This is but an instance, you will say: pardon me—it is a specimen. I have little reason, from my experience, to think the *genus* of English travellers very different from the individual above mentioned, with respect to the arts. Not that I esteem lowly of our English taste; though a little too much given to the sensual in colouring, it is pure enough as to sentiment. That self-same childish satisfaction with the natural, erroneously imagined the summit of art, while it is only the foundation, serves as a good safeguard from the false ideal, pseudo Greek, or frigid French sublime, in painting and sculpture. We have only to refine and elevate our taste, so that it shall no longer set up the hugger-mugger homeliness of a Dutch cabinet-picture (though admirable in its way) as perfection, or a Morland pigstye as the *ne plus ultra* of painting, because it is "so natural"—no longer degrade artists into mere apes of nature, mere living *silhouettes*, to take off her features a little. See how Caravaggio debased the art by his vulgar ambition to

please as being a *naturalista*. If we only want to see nature, why view her at second hand in a piece of canvas or marble? why not look at herself? Portraiture is the lowest department of the arts, and this exacting of the natural would be reducing them in every department to portraiture. Now, even portraiture itself must not have for its sole scope the natural, else it is only fit for handing down prize-pigs and aldermen, farmers' ladies and blood mares, to posterity. The natural is indispensable to every good work of art, though it may be a chimera, but if nothing more than exact imitation were requisite, a lake or a looking-glass were a more highly gifted artist than Raphael or Claude—aye, or Phidias himself. However, I may have a better occasion than the present of expatiating upon the natural and the ideal, which, of a truth, if rightly understood, are the same thing, but very different things if the former be taken in its vulgar acceptation.

Rome held for Darley many disappointments beyond those already named. The modern town looked and smelled as if it were cut out of a mountain of manure. The Vatican was comparatively poor in sculpture, 'filled up' with Canovas. St. Peter's (save for Michelangelo's dome), the paintings of Domenichino, and the frescoes of Raphael fell below his expectations. Yet the melancholy enchantment of the city's ruinous and mighty grandeur so grew upon him that he parted from her at last with regret.

'I believe no city on earth can compete with Rome in the number, grandeur, and beauty of its public walks. Not only the Pincian Hill, so famous for its muncing fashionables and magnificent sunsets, the Palatine, for its Cesarean remains, the Janiculine, which Poussin used to frequent as an open gallery for the splendid panorama beneath; not only the Forum, with its many branches to the Circus Maximus, Aventine Hill, Antonine Baths, Colosseum etc., but every road in the desert part of the city, or stretching into the suburbs from the numerous gates,—nay, the very walk under its huge melancholy walls, glistening at the well-known face of their old kindly sun, or glooming like sensitive things as he leaves them behind,—nothing on earth of the sort can exceed the beauty, the sublime beauty of these. With a glowing autumnal sun, they are richer walks than you often tread in your most golden dreams. There is a broad natural terrace-walk along the Tiber, from Porto del Popolo past the Milvian Bridge; it is lonely and wild, and green, as a bank of the Gihoon in the wilds of Tartary. Here you may ramble whole sunny days in the middle of winter, saturating yourself with enjoyment, visual and visionary, till your eyes grow dim. Aurungzebe's avenue, of five hundred miles, from Agra to Delhi, could surpass it in length alone, and scarce equal it in magnificence. The Borghese Gardens

are also beautiful: interesting too, as the cause of poor Beatrice Cenci's death, Paul V (*dei Borghesi*) having given sentence against her, that they might escheat to him, and then made them public, as a peace-offering to the Romans for his judicial murder. But they have a more artificial look than those "solemn paths of Fame" winding through old Rome, and around it. Devastation here has done the work of taste, and laid out this wilderness of ruins in the reckless regularity of style that distinguishes the mighty Gardener of Earth herself. For ruin, after all, is only Nature asserting her dominion over Art; raising her trophies out of the vain bulwarks trampled down by her lieutenant, Time, and hanging her victorious ivies upon the monuments built to contest with her own the palm of duration. But these meditative scenes are making me too moral for you. Well! The Campagna, I have only to add, you had not time to see half the peculiar of. This green waste of suburb,—houseless, treeless, almost shrubless, as it is, with those gigantic causeways for water travelling, unseen, leagues across it, here and there beset with mouldering tombs and temples, its amphitheatre of purple-gray hills spreading a tremendous chiaroscuro by times over the level fields at their feet, by times reflecting double brightness upon them,—a blue sky, perfectly open, or studded round with pillowy clouds, on which the splendour of heaven reposes . . . here, Rome! here, and in your tenantless regions within, are you truly great these it is that make you well worth a circuit round the globe. This scene of the Campagna may be pronounced unique it creates an indescribable sensation of awe and mournful entrancement. That green and silent continuation of mounds, headed by monuments now and then, resembles the grave-yard of a whole people; and those gigantic hillocks seem, indeed, to proclaim the grandeur of the race that sleep beneath them. Giants in mind they were; but fell like all preceding Anakim, . . . Thus do I, umbrageous philosopher, let fall my maxims, as an oak drops acorns, for the swinish multitude. Nuzzle them up, ye porkers of England! the most perverse of all,—for even in the counsel of a fool there may be found wisdom. . . .

'Winter was delicious here; spring passed in a kind of perpetual smooom, the dust wreathing about in the whirlwinds as spirally as so many waterspouts, and only not whipping our ladies to heaven, in the shape of parasols blown upwards. At present, Rome begins to feel somewhat like a bakehouse, so, as Yorick says, I must take myself out, ere I become still crustier. When the heat sets in here, truly one does feel as if about to be fused at once by a blow-pipe. Half liquified already, these southern climates enable one to conceive plausibly enough, the old metamorphoses of men into rivers, and why there should be so many hot-springs hereabouts. One line of running-hand more, and it will be mere dribble.'¹

¹ Darley's remarks on Rome and what was of note there may be advantageously compared with the opinions recorded at the same time and place by David

From Rome Darley went, for a short stay, to Florence, whence he writes of modern artists. Benvenuti and Bezzuoli, reigning painters in the city, come under his lash. He has nothing but repugnance for the work of Bartolini, whose 'humiliating' bust of Byron was 'so true and turkey foreheaded', save for a Bacchus that should have been called Beppo thê vintager. The sculptor Ricci he describes as a spine-drawn Canova who has followed his master in thinking to represent grandeur by size, an excess of loyalty that has made his monument of Dante a gross and pre-tentious failure. But in Florence herself, despite mosquitoes and scandal, he feels at home.

'Once more at Florence, to which I always return with a Valdarno smile upon my visage, as complacent as one of its own vintages. Florence is the most genuine Italian town in Italy, and you know I so love the characteristic! Rome, besides its numerous mean and modern houses, is such a medley of all architectures—most of them, too, hideous attempts at the superhumanly beautiful—architecture is there so burlesqued and *Borrominesqued*, that you get nothing by a study of its waving lines but a squint or a nausea. The architecture of Florence has to the highest degree that property of what may be called the *classical picturesque*, which constitutes its perfection, videlicet, variety in unity. All the edifices, private and public, harmonize with each other as to general air, so as to give character to the city, but differ in details, with a most happy relief to the eye of a gazer. So it comes that I feel myself at Florence more in the Middle Ages, more in the romantic era of history, when the mind of man was fresh in its resurrection from the preceding state of apathy and oblivion, more in the lap of the mother of art too, than elsewhere, for I am in the midst of what is peculiar (allow me the expression) to them all. But for its climate, and its venomous swarms of insects and English, I could live here a voluntary exile for ever. 'Tis the head quarters of scandalmongers and mosquitos in Italy . . . The town is a kind of huge Dionysius's ear. you can hardly give vent to a breath in any audible shape, without hearing a magnified report of it from all quarters, as if the streets were so many whispering galleries. Florence is thus in an eternal buzz of human gadflies, that sting with their tongues, and though one may heartily despise the insects, nevertheless they are able to keep any person with a tender skin under a perpetual sense of irritation. No one can live comfortable here without the hide of a rhinoceros. It is undergoing a perpetual course of acupuncture. . . . As for me, you know that besides the inestimable purity of my character, I expose it but seldom to the kind of toadspittle so

Scott, 'the Scottish Blake', in his Journal. See *Memoir of David Scott*, by William Bell Scott, 1850.

liberally jettied by squatters at tea and card tables, inasmuch as, like a true philanthrope, I love my species best at a distance, wherefore I really have no personal cause (but disgust) to fall foul of Florentine society—our compatriots in particular—by no means the unpleasantest people in the world (for still there are Americans), if they would only talk a little less scandal, or, at least talk it with more *esprit* . . .’

From Florence Darley passed to Munich, where he stayed till the end of August. A lesser critic might have been impressed by the laudable but transitory efforts of the King of Bavaria to make his city a dwelling-place of the arts with the help of such workers as the earnest and misguided Cornelius, whose barren frescoes were held to rival those of Michelangelo. But Darley was not to be deceived by such excursions into a decadent idealism. He describes the city as a bandbox capital, neat, spruce, and new-looking, with an air of particular tidiness derived in part from the whitewashed houses. Munich aspired to be a gay lady among the mistresses of Eastern Europe: ‘She disputes the myrtle-branch with Vienna, quarrels for the crest of the *medlar* with St. Petersburg herself’ He found that her hard brightness and mincing regularity compared unfavourably with the picturesque beauty of Nuremberg, Wurzburg, Augsburg, and other Bavarian towns. The modern Germanized Greek architecture did not please him the opera was just not disreputable; Bavaria was a bleak pasture for sculpture and painting after Italy. Skilfully he put his finger on the weak spot of the Bavarian renaissance when he calls Munich ‘the hot-house of the arts in Germany. Forced plants are in truth not rare; the rarities are, as might be expected from a hot-house, plants of natural vigour and beauty.’ He has nothing but censure for the spirit of German imitation as symbolized in the work of Cornelius, and finds little to praise either in the manners of the people or the doings of the much-discussed Ludwig I who was playing the part of Hadrian. The weather during his stay was very hot. He felt as languid as ‘a serpent trying to stand on its tail’—a phrase quoted in a letter by his friend to be, Mrs. Carlyle. He did not travel in the manner recommended by Montaigne, as we already know.

‘Figures apart, he [the King] is called a despot by the one party, and fribble by the other. What right has he, say the liberals, to kennel up our students, muzzle our journalists, and lead us about in collars by policemen, like dogs disposed to the hydrophobia? What business has he, say the legitimists, to abet the cause of mob-instruction by establish-

ments for the Fine Arts and patronage of dabble-dabble societies? One side groans, and the other hisses, at his *Pinacothek* and his *Glyphtothek*, and other edifices with which he is beautifying his "Residence-city"—edifices as much out of proportion with its purse as its importance. He is looking to make it [Munich] a *Modern Athens*, and himself a miniature Pericles; both which he will probably accomplish by help of the great political grindstone—taxation. You have heard he is a poet too: yes, publishes hermaphrodite verses,¹ like most of those going, in which you can find no character whatever, except that they have none at all. . . .

'Society at Munich has a strong relish for the pipe and the beer-pot. Smoking, indeed is forbid in the streets, where it might be borne, but permitted in rooms, where it is not tolerable. . . . Sixty Germans will sit dove-tailed in a small dinner room, every door and window shut, with the steam of meats, the evaporation of pint pots, smoke of cigars, meerschaums, tapers, besides the aroma, quite other than divine, exhaling from their own bodies: they will sit thus of the finest summer evening, till they become as reeky and smutty as coalheavers at carouse, and the atmosphere around them is almost thick enough to be twisted. And the best of it is, all ranks are sunk in this enjoyment of the lowest . . .

'Like our own nation, though the Germans can boast even more than their due proportion of master-minds, yet the majority of the people is mere *clod* cut into human shape, and vivified by that genial heat which gives something like sense and feeling to vegetables. . . . With regard to their manners, they have nearly as much to learn as ourselves, being all but as boorish and gruff. Do you know, I imagine myself to have made the physiological observation, in the course of my long tour, that where a people bears any generic affinity to our own, it is proportionally uncouth, insolent, and over-bearing—the Germans, Dutch, Swiss, for example; but above all, our caricatures, the Americans; while, on the other hand, a people allied to the French has the family trait of urbanity and refinement. . . . In fact, it is Latin against Teuton—hereditary civilization against a birthright of barbarism . . .

'Digestion of knowledge must, I fancy, go on very well with the Munchenese, as they do not seem at all disposed to make over-meals. Though claiming to be Germans, who are the very aldermen of literature, I never saw people in this respect more temperate—that is, to judge from appearances. They strike me, at least, as being on a rigorous Abernethy system of mind: no marks of the intellectual turtle on their lips or fingers: if they do "grease their souls" at the literary fleshpots, it is in an exceeding sly way, and no one is a bit the wiser. Tailors at

¹ Beddoes, dallying with medical studies and *Death's Jest Book* at Gottingen, had criticized newspaper extracts from these verses in much the same fashion to Procter and Kelsall in 1829. Later Beddoes studied for some time at Wurzburg (long enough to take the degree of M.D.), and his first favourable opinion of the King (*Letters*, p. 169) was afterwards modified (*ibid.*, p. 201).

Munich, and reckon them critically nine to a man, are ten times as numerous as booksellers the inference is plain. At a word, books are scarce, dear, and bad in general. Lytton Bulwer's are Tully and Plato beside most of them it besets all the windows, title-page after title-page like ballads at a stall. What a deal, to be sure, he contrives to litter in a year! If this be not prolific, why neither is a rabbit-warren. The man must be a cod-fish! The Germans worship Bulwer—call his productions Shakespearian—a good proof, by the bye, how exquisitely they must appreciate the latter. . . .

'Professor Schelling's laurel somewhat resembles Mandane's vine, except that it adorns the head instead of the haunches, overshadowing, as it does, the whole German world. Lord Byron's umbrageous reputation was never more a monopolist.'

The rest of Darley's journey is described in an intimate letter to Milnes from Paris. It is a letter that plunges at once into the deepest issues. The words are swords to reveal the intensity of his inward struggle. It is a document of spiritual anguish and self-disgust wherein a sensitive mind fights almost hopelessly against an encroaching darkness, written in that moment when a man sees, or thinks he sees, his essential self naked, and the sight is torture. There is more here than can be accounted for by wounds due to the lack of literary recognition. They could not pierce so deep or fester so outrageously. More, too, than the fear, become insistent, of failure to achieve expression. The moment and the mood passed and recurred; it is well not to overstress them or turn them into a fixed habit of mind. Some allowance, no doubt, must be made for a certain extravagance of language habitual to the writer. But it is the cry of a most unhappy spirit, to be remembered as part of the background to the fragmentary *Nepenthe*.

(To Richard M Milnes, Esq.

Poste Restante,

Venise,

Italie)

Paris, Oct^r 34.

(Postmark Oct 31 1834)

My dear Milnes,

I am a wretched correspondent—would find it easier to write a volume *de omnibus rebus* than a letter about nothing. And my life is in its current such a canal, that an account of it would be as wearisome to you as Dutch travelling. Not much more amusing to the narrator. What can I say to you, but '—still tumbling on like a half drowned dog thro' the great sewer that carries us from earth into the gulf of eternity?' I am

merely rotting myself to death on this sluggish ooze, longing for the last Great Fall but dreading that it will not suffocate the spirit as well as crush the body You know my theory of hereafter—that it will be a mere sublimation of this life, and that each of us will be in it but the eternal child of his own individual nature. What can *I* then gain by a future Life but an everlasting occasion to make myself miserable? What should I lose by annihilation but perpetual self-crucifixion? 'Tis of no use being a protestant monk, and giving myself the discipline daily—mortification enough God knows! has been my lot, and yet I find myself as graceless still as if I had fed the devil within me on rape & oil-cake Lord! Lord! that the heart can be in such a foul fester, so becrawled & beslimed with the deadliest worm & yet not eaten out at once! Ugh! that it should hang for years in one's bosom still putting forth clusters of polypes & flowering at every point like a lump of coral by the discharge of its own corruptions. How am I rambling?—rambling, rambling, yet never leaving the one centre, myself. This is one of the beautiful results deriving from a life of solitude so recommended by philosophers—we become profound egotists—each the centre, & the circumference too, of his own narrow circle. Well, to go on with it, for it is the only productive field of my mind—from Munich where you left me scrambling among the caltrops of German literature, I departed that life about end of Augt to Heidelberg where I saw a Louis the XIVth castle in ruins by way of a wonder. Slid down the Serpent back of old Rhine to Mayence, a villainous miniature of Birmingham, & to Cologne little better with all its cathedral By the by, is that the Rhine so famous for its fine banks, or is there another in Germany? Mounds of clay I saw, written over with lines of vine, here & there a blotch of underwood, and a few cockle-top castles half modern on the summits, but the deep, rocky, umbrageous, battlemented banks of the Rhine, that wilderness where the Genu of Romance & Reality fought for the palm of poetical creation, that Valley of the Shadow of Death with the River of Life running thro' it,—oh Heavens! that retreat where my spirit went betimes into voluntary banishment from this world of railroads & foundries, to breathe one pure moment out of the dusty atmosphere of this mad whirl society—where are those same banks upon earth? Or are they only in the moon, where my wits went to seek them? I suppose so. At Aix I took up a nail, in the shape of violent rheumatism, & could go no farther. Lay there for a week covered with leeches of all kinds apothecaries & doctors included—came out with body & purse squeezed by the two latter like one of the other—travelled on in mourning, sulky & stolid & shaking my brows at every one like a horse horse, thro' Liège, Antwerp, Mechlin, & Brussels. Some consolatory Hemlings or Emmelinks at latter—two Peruginos ditto—and a beautiful Leonardo. Here am I now laid up for the winter at Paris What I should give to be bed ridden for the next five months! but I'm too much at buffets with myself

ever to rest except in the grave Have only written a few hundred lines of a thing I call *Nepenthé*, which will probably be posthumous like most my other incubations Must now set about scribbling kitchenstuff.

Are you still preaching up Wordsworth? and writing in his style sentimental pieces upon *Go-Carts* or *Girandolas*? Philosophical profundities dish deep Reflective poetry quoth'a?—that reflects upon nothing but yourselves Go your ways, and set beautiful thoughts to music, that's the secret of true poetry, which nobody less than God can teach you to put in practice. Goethe when I know him will be to me a *parvus Apollo* I've read most of your present—no great expansions of mind, but there is a little foolish charm about the things that carry you on, on, on, & over & over again You are deep in Egyptian I know, so can probably decypher these hieroglyphics.

Ever your's
George Darley.

P.S My address is 34 Rue St Dominique, Hôtel de l'Orient—but perhaps *Poste Restante* would be more certain as I might change lodging. Dead or alive I shall be glad to hear from you Dont take example from this cataract of a letter, but at present I am much hurried

Most of the letters that Darley wrote to Milnes are despondent. It was, perhaps, the abundant riches of his friend—in youth, talents and prospects—that made Darley's own case so bitter a contrast and discovered his misery. His letters to Cary, on the other hand, are full of whimsical nonsense and pleasant banter that would seem, at first gaze, to come from a light heart. The change in tone is due mainly to the assumption of the social mask. Such a letter, a skit on political and social gossip, reached Cary from Paris.

(To Rev^d H. F. Cary, British Museum)

Paris, Oct^r 1834
(Postmark Nov. 25, 1834.)

My dear Danteggio

As I know you are newsmonger enough to like hearing from a friend, when it costs you *no postage*, I scratch you off a little fiddlefaddle to your taste by Francis Just arrived at Paris from a tour thro' the Netherlands. At Antwerp the whole political world was in commotion with a report that the second cousin of the Empress of Russia's head footman had come on a special visit to the Queen of Holland's favourite maid of honor King Leo by the way (but let this be a secret) is suspected to have pawned his crown to some French jeweller and to wear paste. . . .

As for the winter fashions here, claret frocks seem to be quite out—a lightish pea-green (which by the by would suit your complexion

admirably) promise to be most in vogue. Waistcoats broad-striped red and blue, cut bias-wise Pantaloon (trousers are exploded) made very tight to the shape, ending just at the fall of your calf, with stockings to match, and shoes very low in the quarters, so that the point of your great toe alone should be covered. Hat worn very much on the side of the head, rather over your left eye . . . Black cravats . . . the tie has gone over to London, you will get it at Waterloo House No posies in the buttonhole—mark that Signor Danteggio . . . My next letter (post free) shall contain the Fashions for Ladies.

So you have published a new version of Peter Pindar!¹ Well, I always thought this would be a work well suited to your genius, and only supposed you were bought off by the [blank in original 'government?'] from undertaking it. Illustrated by Cruikshank of course—you and he could not do without each other. I have done nothing but complete my literal translation of Virgil which gave you such a fit of the jaundice. How your *occhi di bragia* will glare when you see it hot pressed, from the Albermarle Street literary oven, in quarto!

Scarmiglione.²

While in Paris Darley wrote for the *Athenaeum* an important article on French painting, in which he drew attention to the movement away from 'classical' sterility and tawdry affectation towards natural feeling and good colour. He also reviewed in some detail the exhibition of pictures at the Louvre. The following letter to Allan Cunningham, written on receipt of his friend's edition of Burns, shows that he was in London again by the middle of April 1835.

(To Allan Cunningham)

23 April—35.
27 Upper Eaton Street.

My dear Cunningham,

Everyone professes an undeviating love of truth—for my own part I acknowledge a very frequent *hate* of it, as it often obliges me to say what is scarce polite & not at all palatable to my friends Accept my thanks for sending me a Book³ which does not place me in this unpleasant predicament—I can speak of your Burns without offence either to honesty or you,—a rare accident in criticism Your pen runs thro' the Great Ploughman's Life as his share did thro' the field—straightforward & boldly & deeply—turning up the fresh mould, showing the solid rockiness that supported it, and the racy weeds that rooted there, but withal

¹ A jesting allusion to Cary's *Pindar in English Verse*, Moxon, 1833.

² One of the devils tormenting the Barrators in the *Inferno*.

³ *The Works of Robert Burns, with his Life*. By Allan Cunningham. In eight volumes. London: James Cochran, 1834.

shining along No one can blame you for occasional tenderness—it is only letting the ‘Mouse’ escape the murdering pattle. How it would unglorify Shakspeare, & soil imagination, if he were brought down to the kennel in which real existence runs!

Your plan of illustrating the *Life* by the *Works* is most judicious. I only doubt whether you have not carried it somewhat too far, by giving *there* what would have come more properly into your *Annotations* on the several *Poems* where all that concerned them would have been found at once. This however is a minor fault, if one at all I should wish to think the same of the preference you give to Thomson’s impudent corrections of ‘Here awa there awa’ to the original words. You have, it is true, Burns’s own adoption of them to plead, but I contend that adoption *must* have been complimentary or compulsive in some manner. Why not at least give the Poet’s own mintage as well as that melted down & embased, with the stamp of an impertinent Three-Farthings upon it? Currie gives all, scrupulously: ‘Rest, rest ye wild storms in the cave o’ your slumbers’ is infinitely more sublime and ear-filling than ‘Ye hurricanes rest etc’—As for ‘*Blow gently ye billows*’, it is I submit little short of a non-sense. ‘*Row gently*’ was the original. ‘But if he’s forgotten his faithfulest Nannie’ has the weakness of a beaten worm about it in comparison with—‘But oh! if he’s faithless and minds na’ his Nannie’. I cannot remember the other disfigurations—these are the principal retained by you ‘It was na’ the blast’ may suit better with the air, tho’ Burns’s first-written line (as I recollect) ‘*But it was na the blast*’ left no such terrible dam as that makes in the stream of his rhythm. Excuse my be-Thomsoning you with proposed corrections—but I have a foolish prejudice in favor of the Poet himself, & cannot bear the vile putty & stone-cutting stupidity with which his images are smoothed & scraped by blockheads whose effrontery alone is miraculous.²

I subjoin a few typographical notes which may render your *Work* more correct tho’ they cannot more interesting and valuable³

¹ *The Works of Robert Burns with an account of his Life etc* By J Currie Second Edition, 1801.

² Darley’s criticisms are not very happy, though his general principles are sound. The poem in question is *Wandering Willie* (‘Here awa, there awa, wandering Willie’). Burns sent the song to George Thomson, he and Erskine submitted an amended copy to Burns, who presumably, perhaps from good nature, adopted some of the suggestions. Currie prints the three versions. So does Allan Cunningham—Burns’s original version in large type, the other two in small type. But the line about Nannie rightly praised by Darley seems to have been a suggestion by Thomson, whereas the version that ‘has the weakness of a beaten worm’ is Burns’s original line Also in ‘*But it was na the blast*’, the *but* seems to be an invention of Darley’s. Cunningham had, however, wrongly printed *blow* for *row* in Burns’s original version, if Currie is a sure guide Henley and Henderson, in their edition, print a further version made later by Burns in which he reverts to some of his original readings Perhaps that is Darley’s justification.

³ A note of eight typographical errors on a separate sheet.

Many thanks also for your 'Maid of Elvar'¹ which contains passages of exceeding beauty, & is carried on with as much vigour throughout as is compatible with that fatal stanza

Yours with sincere admiration & regard,
George Darley.

N.B. Perhaps your argument at p 232 Vol I. a little invalid The question is whether a farmer, or an Exciseman farmer be more in the way of temptation? St. Anthony himself was exposed to allurements tho' a solitary—but would he not have been more exposed to them if St Anthony had been an exciseman, and a *social* exciseman?²

Another letter to Cunningham may tentatively be placed here, for there is insufficient evidence to date it at present It is Darley's comment on Cunningham's plan to enlarge, and possibly correct, Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*. When he was a young stone-mason, Cunningham, so his son Peter tells us, bought at auction in Edinburgh for three shillings and elevenpence a copy of that book which he refused to part with at a handsome profit. It became one of his treasures. From it came the idea for his *Lives of the Most Eminent British Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, a work finished in 1833. This projected work on the Poets may have been the successor, natural enough, to that book. It was neither finished nor published, though some time before his death in October 1842, Cunningham announces that 'the first volume is all but ready'.³

(To Allan Cunningham, Esq.)

14 July.

[No postmark—by hand.]

My dear Friend,

I have looked over your List of Poets, and even had I all my recollections about me, could scarce add another good name to the number. It would perhaps be cruel to congratulate you on knowing so many. Full one

¹ A long poem in Spenserian stanzas published by Moxon in 1833 (1832 on the engraved title).

² Cunningham had written: 'Some have hinted that his appointment in the Excise was unfortunate, as it led to the temptation of pleasant company and social excess. There is no situation under the sun free from this, even a farmer is as much exposed to such allurements as any one.'

³ Peter Cunningham, F.S.A., published an edition of the *Lives*, with notes corrective and explanatory, in three volumes in 1854. This remained the standard edition for forty years. He makes no mention of his father's work on the subject, but says that it was his father's copy of the *Lives* that determined him to become Johnson's editor 'twenty years ago' (i.e. in 1834). It should be mentioned that Cary contributed a 'Continuation of Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*' to the *London Magazine*, beginning with a life of Thomas Warton in the August number of 1821.

half of them, we shall both agree, are less fit for Olympus than the Paradise of Fools. But being compelled to keep square with Johnson, I acknowledge you can scarcely get rid of them. This is the fruit of having to cater for the public swallow. When Leviathan is to be fed, we must heave in bushels of garbage, or the great bathos of his stomach would never feel itself filled. Had we to make our own List, it would be far different. No ingenuity can erect a noble structure on the base of Johnson. Taking so low a standard, do what you will the work, if carried out, would be less like the Lives of the Poets than the Lives of All who have ever writ Verses. What of good may be done on such a plan, I know no one more capable of effecting than yourself—but it is not an employment I fear much more congenial to your tastes than my own.

You conceive yourself no doubt obliged to exclude from your List all who have never written any but dramatic Poetry. Else wherefore omit such names as Marston, Middleton, Heywood, Decker, Webster & others? For my own part I do not see why certain scores of the Ducks and Dukes should not give place to our Early Dramatists, and so furnish out indeed a complete as well as unblotted scroll of British Poets. Johnson's Lives should remain, as the Devil's harangues in Milton, tho' made up of spite, slander, wrong-headedness, bluster, & blasphemy. But they should remain for their abstract merit as glowing ebullitions of the brain, not for what pismire Malone calls them, 'the finest body of criticism in the world'.

On second thoughts, & finding in what a track-way you must run, do not let me be anywise influential about making you re-write Milton's Life, unless you find it advisable yourself. But by all means, and as you would have the serpent at the root of your own laurel destroyed, render Johnson innocuous in your notes on his worst piece of posthumous assassination—I coincide with you against Southey as to the Dates.

Your sincere well wisher

George Darley.

Here follows a set of names, some of which may not be in your List yet deserve it as well as some that are.

[Most of the names given, such as those of Giles Fletcher, Matthew Green, Cotton, Smart, Ogilvie,^{*} and Moore, the fabulist, are cancelled in ink. The only uncanceled names are 'Chamberlayne—author of *Pharronida*, I. Chalkhull vide Iz. Walton, Sir R. Matland, Robertson—"Argentine"'. Probably the cancellation was done by Cunningham.]

^{*} Probably John Ogilvie, born c. 1733 at Aberdeen. See *Lives of Scottish Poets*. printed for Thomas Boys, vol. II, 1822, for an account of him. The following naive statement is to be found therein: 'In speaking of the literary character of Dr. Ogilvie, the first thing that must strike every one is the vast disparity between the quantity he has written, and the degree of celebrity which he has acquired.' Ogilvie was known to Johnson.

Darley was not interested solely in the literary activities of his friends. If he brought back with him from the Continent any completed works (not a remote possibility) they were never published. But one thing he did print, at his own expense—two cantos of the *Nepenthe* already mentioned to Milnes, which despite the announcement 'a third part is to follow' was never to be finished. Miss Mitford describes it as 'printed with the most imperfect and broken types, upon a coarse, discoloured paper, like that in which a country shopkeeper puts up his tea, with two dusky leaves of a still dingier hue, at least a size too small, for cover'; and her description is not far from the truth. *Nepenthe* is a slight pamphlet coarsely printed on mediocre paper, clumsily sewn into thin unlettered olive paper covers. It was a strange intruder in an age of expensively produced Annuals, but most attractive in its strangeness, a poet's protest that poetry alone mattered. The cost was not even the farthing that Horne charged for his epic *Orion*. From the fact that *Nepenthe* was not intended for the public at all it would seem that Darley had even at this time despaired of winning general recognition. But he did, emphatically, desire the judgement of his friends and peers. It was printed for them alone in a deliberate attempt to fortify his wavering mind with their approbation. A deliberate attempt and a deliberate choice. in his view the best of the work he had by him. Yet an experiment hazardous in the extreme because the poem, by its nature, invited bewilderment. We shall see later by implication what answers Darley received to his virtual ultimatum, 'here is poetry that matters'. His friends were at least impressed, if the comparatively large number of letters they preserved on the subject of *Nepenthe* was not due merely to chance.

Nepenthe, therefore, though a drab waif in appearance, meant perhaps more to its author as a testing ground than any other of his works. Eight years had passed since the publication of *Sylvia*. The new poem was an effort to rehabilitate himself as poet. To his small band of friends, then, *Nepenthe* made its way. Cary and Procter received copies; what they thought of it can only be guessed.

(To H. F. Cary)

[No address.]

(Endorsed by Cary 'G. Darley 1835'.)

My dear Pindar,

I send you what there is printed of my *Nepenthe*, as there is little probability of the poem being finished. You will see that it is done at

my own expence—no publisher would have undertaken it—and a very few copies are sufficient for all my readers.

Your's ever most truly
George Darley.

Perhaps you will send the other copy to Procter as I do not know where he is to be found?—and you'll oblige me.

Two copies likewise went to Cunningham, in return for his edition of Burns.

(To Allan Cunningham Esq)

[No address.]
29 June [1835].¹

My dear Allan,

As a poor return for your eight splendid volumes, will you accept my sorry little pamphlet of a Poem? One half finished work out of an hundred which indolence & hopelessness united keep me from concluding. I was pretty sure no Publisher would undertake it in any shape, and therefore printed a few copies of this part myself for the small number of friends who care about my verses. The greatest recommendation I can give you of my *Nepenthe* is that it fulfils Mrs. Cunningham's wish about *Sylvia*, being 'all prologue'.

Your's in weal & woe
George Darley.

The second copy is for your Son, if he also will do me the favor to accept.

The unfavourable judgement came soon. Cunningham, with Scottish common sense, apparently insisted on the lack of immediate human interest. To this superficial objection, which meant that the poem did not conform to the cult of domestic affections then in vogue, Darley made vigorous rejoinder.

(To Allan Cunningham)

27 Up. Eaton St.
8 July [1835].²

My dear friend and faithful adviser,

I am perfectly conscious how just your censure is—a want of the humanities pervades my fragment. The truth is I am sick of them—so much has been said about the human affections and home feelings and sympathies of the heart, etc , not only by Lord Byron and Wordsworth and Mrs. Hemans, but by every young man and woman that can square a few lines into the form of poetry. I hate those humanities, not only as a surfeit, but because they have brought down, to my mind, the tone of our poetic genius. Every milliner (she or he) can scribble greensick

¹ 1835 seems more probable than 1836 because of Darley's mention of the Burns.

² See preceding letter.

verses about love and melancholy and sentiment skin-deep, but I defy them to affect imagination, which is at least as principal an attribute of poetry as feeling. You have said on other occasions that I was not wholly deficient of this latter—but unless my subject allows me to concentrate it I do not, or rather can not, find in it enough of excitement. My mind is sluggish by nature, liable to deep and long collapses, from which it is roused only by stimulants. That's a fault, I know, but we must rather follow our nature than force it. Well again, the third part of my 'Nepenthe' was to have contained my modicum of the humanities; as the first and second shew the extremes of Aspiration and Dejection, with their evil effects, so the third was to shew the medium, contentment with our human lot, and its effect, happiness. But after all, I confess the world of 'Nepenthe' would be a world apart, because in such a world does the author himself by necessity live, and is ignorant of all other. What is more piteously ridiculous than to hear a blackbird whistle 'Now we're all met together' in an area?

What I have here said is to explain, not to defend, as I am quite willing to undergo any condemnation I justly deserve.—Yours thankfully, and unfeignedly ever bounden,

George Darley.

Will you send me back the two 'Nepenthes' I gave you, as they contain some material errors of the press? Two others, corrected, go to you instead.

Cunningham's criticism was a foretaste of what was to come. That is why Miss Mitford's copy of *Nepenthe* was 'garnished at top and bottom with a running margin in his own writing'. We have seen three original *Nepenthes*, none of them, unhappily, so adorned.¹ But it is time to consider the poem itself.

¹ While this book is passing through the press a copy of *Nepenthe*, annotated by Darley, has at last come to light. Since the poem has never been accurately reprinted, it is hoped to publish a facsimile of this, presumably unique, document.

VI. 1835-1836

'Nepenthe' and its reception. Darley as reviewer. Letters to Milnes, Cunningham, Miss Mitford, Chorley.

DARLEY, in one of his presentation copies, calls *Nepenthe* 'a fragmentary sketch'. He meant it to be, eventually, a logical allegorical whole. Perhaps the best plan of his design is that given in a later letter to Milnes:

'In short, the key to my whole poem is this—to show the folly of discontent with the natural tone of human life Canto I means to shew the deleterious effects of ultra-natural joy, tho' imbibed from heaven itself, Canto II, those of ultra-natural melancholy, imbibed from the regions whose comfort is darkness & consolation bewailment. I must acknowledge that both developments are imperfect in these fragmentary Cantos—great part especially of the second object has to be worked out in Canto III—which will also conclude with exhibiting the advantageous results of the mingled joy and melancholy imbibed from the native fountain of humanity'

To this explanation headings at the top of each page were added, the form of annotation later resorted to by Browning for *Sordello*. The interest of these headings is great. They help to make clearer the development of the poet's plan and thought, in what is by far the most important work he ever wrote. But, despite their help, *Nepenthe* is still, in essence, an obscure poem.

It remains, too, a poem on which there will continue to be a wide disparity of opinion, both as to the measure of the poet's achievement, and his meaning in detail. High claims have been made for it as a close-knit work of art, notably by Dr Robert Bridges,¹ than whom few can speak on such a matter with more authority. We cannot do better than quote part of his interpretative appreciation

After commenting on the poet's metrical mastery and the congenial opportunity presented to his 'imaginative' faculty by the subject, Dr. Bridges says:

'The reader indeed may be warned at once that this wholly imaginative poem being, like 'Endymion', an allegory, gives also at first the same effect of a superabundance of poetry with a minimum of obvious meaning. But while its general purport may elude or even defy com-

¹ An article on 'Nepenthe' in *The Academy* of 4 August 1906

prehension, the verse and diction—if I may sternly except the first lyric—are throughout masterly, rich and elevated, and one reads with almost unbroken pleasure, admiration and even wonder so that the annoyance which the obscurity of its general aim must certainly occasion, is due not to any absence of satisfaction, but to one's natural impatience at being unable to focus or connect the importunate magnificence. As for the allegory, the closer one examines it the less doubt one has that every word was the approved expression of impassioned intention but since language thus born will carry more than its contemplated interpretation, one cannot look to define the meaning in every detail¹

Then, after quoting extracts 'inadequate to represent Darley's inexhaustible variety', he proceeds to give an outline of the allegory's meaning:

'We have only to do with the existing Cantos I and II. In the first the Phoenix is the symbol of "melancholy gladness"; and in the second the less important unicorn is the symbol of "majestic sadness" Ambition is the term used throughout to denote the motive of dissatisfaction which makes man seek a nepenthe.

'The first Canto is the picture of excessive joy in the more animal sphere, that is, the ecstasy of life, joys born of the sun and the passage of experience is from the hot sun-joys to death in the cold ocean

'The second Canto is the picture of ideal pleasure, that is, the ecstasy of mental life, joys born of the Moon, and leading to the desert wherein the unicorn lives in majestic sadness; and the passage is from the moon-joys to the dry desert . . . The transition from sun-joys to idealism is well invited by the contemplation of antiquity in the magnificent introduction, of over 200 lines, to the Second Canto'²

Most students of poetry who give thought to the poem—for *Nepenthe* does not yield its secrets at a second or even third reading—will agree, in the main, with Dr. Bridges' estimate and his general explanation of Darley's purpose. But some qualifications are necessary. Darley's friends were not unnaturally obtuse because they failed to gather all his meaning.

The two cantos of *Nepenthe* may be regarded as the poet's *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*. They have, as such, a certain ill-defined unity. But Darley is no more concerned with 'the deleterious effects' of joy and melancholy, however 'ultra-natural', than is Milton himself. The self-proclaimed moralist is drowned in the poet. His professed key, therefore, does not with decision fit the

¹ Dr. Bridges sees, too, in Canto I, 'a prophetic warning to England, lest in her pursuit of sun-joys she too should fall like Icarus'.

lock of the allegory, which often eludes interpretation. The reader is left with an uneasy feeling that he is baffled, especially in the second canto; while conscious that he is reading poetry, he is perplexed to know why certain episodes are introduced, and what is their relation to the whole. The truth seems to be that Darley was, fortunately, more interested in poetry than allegory. For this reason it is difficult to imagine that *Nepenthe* could have been finished on the lines laid down. Darley lacked the calm strength needed for a middle flight.¹

This leads us to a more important qualification. Darley was essentially a lyric poet, with little architectonic gift. The construction of *Nepenthe* is uncertain; and it is this weakness that betrays the author into a provoking obscurity. It is not a difficulty natural to him; the result of a wayward personal symbolism or a manner of thought too sternly compressed such as, in Blake and Browning, promises to yield some meaning worth a wrestle. It is, on the contrary, an incoherence due to a divided aim, an inability to develop an idea with the inevitable logic proper to poetry. *Nepenthe* is best read neither as an allegorical poem with a purpose, nor as part of a projected work, but rather as a number of lyric episodes loosely strung together, forming a succession of spiritual adventures. Some virtue and strength the poet derived from his idea. It helped to carry on a mind incapable of prolonged calm flight, through what seemed to be a considerable imaginative excursion, by masking the tendency to collapse. Without this purpose, little though it counts in the poetry, Darley would have broken down sooner. The successful lyric flights exhaust him; they are followed by a furious beating of wings in a vain attempt to keep above earth. Then again, from his idea, comes strength. He was himself well aware of his limitations. His friends, then, may be forgiven their bewilderment, but not their blindness to the astonishing quality of numerous long episodes. What, he might well ask, did they look for? In these passages he is a master; free, for the moment, of an ultimate region in poetry where only the few find their way. It is the country of *Kubla Khan* and *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*.

¹ The poet has himself told us what he proposed to do in Canto III, and it has been suggested to me that the long poem *Harvest Home* (first published in *Findens' Tableaux* for 1841, edited by Miss Mitford) is an essay towards the completion of *Nepenthe*. But though this interesting description of rustic content contains many characteristic felicities, the poetry is not of the same order as that of *Nepenthe*.

The origin of *Nepenthe* is perhaps to be found in that passage¹ of the *Faerie Queene* where Cambina stays the strife between Cambello and Triamond by means of a fabulous drink in a golden cup, described thus by Spenser:

Nepenthe is a drinck of souerayne grace,
Deuized by the Gods, for to asswage
Harts grief, and bitter gall away to chace,
Which stirs vp anguish and contentious rage:
In stead thereof sweet peace and quiet age
It doth establish in the troubled mynd.
Few men, but such as sober are and sage,
Are by the Gods to drinck thereof assynd;
But such as drinck, eternall happinesse do fynd.

This, it may be, bears some resemblance to the true *Nepenthe* that was to be described in the last canto. In the completed cantos the elixir is given wider powers. Darley expressed, in a letter written in 1842, an opinion on the work of Shelley and Keats almost amounting to indifference, yet it is probable that the wanderings of Alastor counted for something in the fitful adventures of *Nepenthe*, and there are certain obvious debts to *Endymion*. One or two lines may have been suggested by *Ænone* and the *Lotos-Eaters* of Tennyson's first decisive volume, that of 1832. In point of metre Milton is Darley's model. These, however, are small matters.

The wanderer (or poet), seeking the panacea *Nepenthe*, finds himself on the hill of Solitude; and the first canto opens excellently with a crisp description of a warm sun-burned heath, untrod by man, where runs a labyrinthine stream that he intends to follow on its course to the ocean. Of himself he says:

I have been still led like a child
My heedless, wayward path and wild,
Thro' this rough world by feebler clues
So they were bright, than rainbow dews
Spun by the insect gossamer
To climb with thro' the ropy air.

But the stream drops over a tremendous cliff into the sea, and as he moves down from the heights he is seized by the Phoenix and borne away. Unlike the disturbed Chaucer on his journey

to the House of Fame he does not remain conscious. The Phoenix is the symbol of melancholy gladness. In the explanation of Dr Robert Bridges¹ she is sprung of the Sun and is killed by the Sun, and thus symbolizes the joys of sense which perish in the using but are ever created anew. The poet interrupts his narrative to tell of her death in a lyric passage of surpassing beauty.

O blest unfabled Incense Tree
That burns in glorious Araby,
With red scent chalicng the air
Till earth-life grow Elysian there!
Half buried to her flaming breast
In this bright tree, she makes her nest,
Hundred-sunned Phenix! when she must
Crumble at length to hoary dust!
Her gorgeous death-bed! her rich pyre
Burnt up with aromatic fire!
Her urn, sight high from spoiler men!
Her birthplace when self-born again!
The mountainless green wilds among
Here ends she her unechoing song!
With amber tears and odorous sighs
Mourned by the desert where she dies!²
Laid like the young fawn mossily
In sun-green vales of Araby,
I woke, hard by the Phenix tree
That with shadeless boughs flamed over me,
And upward called by a dumb cry
With moonbroad orbs of wonder, I
Beheld the immortal Bird on high
Glassing the great sun in her eye;
Steadfast she gazed upon his fire,
Still her destroyer and her sire!

¹ *The Spirit of Man, An Anthology*, 1916, a note on one of the passages from *Nepenthe*.

² Cf four lines from *An Elegie, or friends passion, for his Astrophall*.

And that which was of woonder most,
The Phenix left sweet *Araby* :
And on a Cædar in this coast,
Built vp her tombe of spicerie, . . .

Dr Bridges explains *mountainless* as meaning *void of ambition*, and *unechoing* as *awakening no spiritual echoes*. Darley, however, says that the elixir is 'instinct with spiritual flame'.

As if to his her soul of flame
 Had flown already, whence it came, . . .
 But breathing yet while she doth burn,
 The deathless Daughter of the sun!
 Slowly to crimson embers turn
 The beauties of the brightsome one,
 O'er the broad nest her silver wings
 Shook down their wasteful glitterings,
 Her brinded neck high-arched in air,
 Like a small rainbow faded there,
 But brighter glowed her plumy crown
 Mouldering to golden ashes down.
 With fume of sweet woods, to the skies . . .
 Her life-breath rose in sacrifice! .

As she sinks down to dust she is mourned by the poet and by earth

Beauty may weep her fair first-born
 Perchance in as resplendent tears,
 Such golden dewdrops bow the corn
 When the stern sickleman appears;

He drinks one drop of the amber blood, which is 'imbued with the Solar Spirit'. A brief bewildering chaos is succeeded by fierce joy with a sense of unbounded power and ambition. Through the dizzy landscape come the revellers, a band known to Keats.

Light-trooping o'er the distant lea
 A band I saw, where Revelry
 Seemed on her bacchant foot to be;
 And heard the dry tambour afar
 Before her Corybantian car
 Booming the rout to winy war. .

Before he joins them the Phoenix needs his help. He pours on her white embers some drops of the fabulous elixir. Without this aid years must have passed before she assumed her form again; with it she is at once whole:

And like the sun in giant mould
 Cast of unnumbered stars, behold,
 The Phenix with her crest of gold,
 Her silver wings, her starry eyes,
 The Phenix from her ashes rise!

When she has flown away the dancing band of nymphs and revellers claims him:

Nymphs, with tresses which the wind
 Sleekly tosses to its mind,

More deliriously dishevelled
 Than when the Naxian widow revelled . . .

Over hills and uplands they hurry him, up the sun-burned mountain-side, ever higher and higher. There are no obstacles now to ambition. His impetuous uncurbed mind can mount and dare, roam and penetrate where it will. He is flushed with elation and bliss. A sweet intoxication floods his being, wings of ecstasy bear him lightly onward; all his senses are in flower.

Still, O still my step sublime
 Footless air would higher climb,
 Like the Chaldee Hunter bold
 Bulder of towery Babel old!
 O what sweeter, finer pleasure,
 Than this wild unruly measure,
 Reeling hither, thither, so
 Higher to the heavens we go!
 Nymph and Swain, with rosy hand,
 Wreathed together in a band,
 Like embracing vines that loop
 Browner elms with tendril hoop,
 Let us, liker still to these
 In rich autumn's purple weather,
 Mix, as the vineyard in the breeze,
 Our wine-dropping brows together! . .

Warm winds and the woodland creatures, fauns with pipe and cittern, tabor and cymbal, bring their music to the swift measure of delight:

Uproar sweet! as when he crost,
 Omnipotent Bacchus, with his host
 To farthest Ind, and for his van
 Satyrs and other sons of Pan
 With swoln eye-burying cheeks of tan,
 Who trolled him round which way he ran
 His spotted yoke through Hindostan,
 And with most victorious scorn
 The mild foes of wine to warn,
 Blew his dithyrambic horn!
 That each river to his source
 Trembled—and sunk beneath his course,
 Where, 'tis said of many, they
 Mourn undiscovered to this day.

But still he aspires to range and feast his eyes. Those sweet nymphs, the senses, hurry him past Petrea and Palmyrene,

Lebanon and Carmel, to Taurus, whence, if the vision hold and the dream keep bright, he will haste

To those highest peaks the sun
Steps with glittering sandal on,
That this bosom-fire as fast
As his, breathe forth in the clear vast!

Such calm beauty as that which lives in the winding vales of Mæonia whose streams are white with swans, does not tempt him.

Leave we the downlands, tho' be there
Joy a lifelong sojourner;
There for ever wildwood numbers
Poured in Doric strains dilute
Thro' the unlaborious flute,
Soothe Disquiet to his slumbers;
In his rosebed sleeps the bee
Lulled by Lydian melody,
Half the honied morn in vain!
Idler still than Doric swain,
Steept in double sweetness he
Hums, as he dreams, his wildwood strain;
Thy Mysian vineplucker sings i' the tree;
And Ionia's echoing train
Of reapers, bending down the lea,
Make rich the winds with minstrelsy.

His goal is green Ida, 'woody-belted Ida', the mountain of the Gods. To her he addresses a hymn of rapture, on her pinnacle he stands, bound like the wild swan for shores invisible, though with only the waxen wings of 'blind ambition' as a means of flight. His peril is his delight. Nor is he deterred by the remembrance of the lost youth Icarus who, also daring greatly, was doomed to a restless everlasting sleep. He disregards the warning from the Hellespont, and passes to Rhodope and great Hæmus. One step from there will take him into eternity, a land where the present fierce joy will be absorbed in an eternal tranquillity. But this step is not to be taken. Up the banks of the Strymon, whose

Silver sand
Broader and broader yet doth gleam,
Spreading into ocean's strand;
Over whose white verge the storm
With his wide-swaying loomy arm
Weaves his mournful tapestry,
Slowly let down from sky to sea. . . .

comes a brood of Furies. His Nymphs have become Eumenides. To escape their hideous attack he chooses the fate of Icarus and drowns himself. There is a rightness in this feverish end, but Darley is as reluctant to interrupt his Dance of Rhapsody as Spenser to overturn the Bower of Bliss.

The first canto is tantalizingly near to being a complete poem. A portion of the care Darley gave to the correction of his lyrics (for he was a fastidious craftsman) might have made all the difference between the loosely knit episodes we have and a bravely finished, interwoven whole. His metrical mastery is apparent. The intensity of his vision makes him symbolical rather than allegorical. The poetry, at its best, has its own fervid and unmistakable distinction. But because of these qualities we forget, perhaps too readily, Darley's limitations. Mr. Gordon Bottomley, in his *Hymn of Imagination*, says that imagination 'works by still and inward symmetries' for the attainment of which 'mental immoderation is in vain'. Darley was liable to mistake this mental immoderation for imagination. It may be that it was beyond his power to purge *Nepenthe* of his errors in ecstasy. Nevertheless, the first part of the poem is his chief and sufficient title to be called a poet.

The second canto, more disjointed and obscure, shows a falling off. It opens with an over-long invocation to Antiquity in which the poet makes a tour of the world's wonders. The verse is sonorous rather than dignified, impressive without being convincing. In his use of resounding names Darley's touch is unsure and his epithets are often at fault. The most effective passage is that which stands apart from the rest of the apostrophe by its difference of tone. It is a description of the Fortunate Isles, whose syren beguiles him, recalling that pleasant far-away land to be found in the Cynewulfian *Phænx*.

Goalward at length untired I flee
Past the still Verdurous Isles, that be
Oases of the herbless sea,
And those Happy Gardens placed
Eden-like in an azure waste;
Befanned with sunniest winds, the air
Swims visible in bright halo there,
Feeding with such rich juice the mould
That every fruit-tree drops with gold,
In tawny Harvest's pendant ear
Glitters the gold grain twice a year,

Each rivulet doth his bed emboss
 With the crisp ore and yellowing dross,
 His margin trim with asphodel
 Gorgeously frount, and spreads as well
 Woodland wide-over this rich flower
 Till each fair Isle thro' dale and fell
 Seems to inlap a golden shower,
 Heaven-loved, and where the breezes run
 Her wavy grasses full of sun,
 Flow like a bright flood all in one.

After the poet has vowed himself to Antiquity and Solitude there comes a break in the narrative, and the digression ended, the drowned wanderer is found escaping from a dimly realized inferno, the Valley of Death, with the sense of sin strong in him

O sorrow of Sinfulness! the gate
 To Pain, kept wide by watchful Hate!—
 Sloping aloft with cliffy sides,
 Thro' the burnt air the porchway rides;
 Demoniac shapes, devices grim,
 Trenching the storied pannels dim, . . .
 Alas! what scalding sandwind rolls
 Me to the sulphury rack of souls
 Fierce on, and scarfs my victim eyes
 With careless wreaths for sacrifice?

Here the allegory—it can no longer be called symbolism—begins to cloud. The poet is swept by a whirlwind to the desert, where he is tortured by despair until Morning, 'with light-blown silver veil', comes to evoke a sweet sigh from the colossal Memnon, one of the two statues that he has appealed to in vain. Darley is much concerned with this statue of the son of Tithonus and Aurora.¹ To it were ascribed fabulous properties. Lemprière, whom Darley no doubt consulted, describes it as 'uttering a melodious sound, like the snapping of a harp-string, as soon as the first rays of the morning fell upon it; but at the setting of the sun, and during the night, it uttered very lugubrious sounds'. Darley's attempt to use the remote and powerless Memnon as the symbol of an imprisoned intelligence is, on the whole, a failure. He introduces a sweetly-flowing lyric, almost Tennysonian in movement, to voice

¹ The story is so well known as to be a commonplace of poetry, but Darley may have had in mind an article in the *London Magazine* of February 1821 on Memnon's Head, signed H. (Hood), which ends with a poem of some distinction and length supposed to be spoken by the statue

Memnon's lament, each stanza, unfortunately, is in 'one same chime'.

Winds of the West arise!

Hesperian balmyest airs, O waft back those sweet sighs
To her that breathes them from her own pure skies,
Dew-dropping, mixt with dawn's engoldened dyes,

O'er my unhappy eyes!

From primrose bed and willow bank, where your moss cradle lies,
O from your rushy bowers, to waft back her sweet sighs,

Winds of the West arise!

Both Memnon and the poet would fain escape. The latter, unsubdued in spirit and aided by the divine power of Nepenthe, dares more wanderings, to Thebes, across Nubia, to Abyssinia, even to the Mountains of the Moon. But the anguish of Memnon draws him back.

And now that Dawn, with flickering plumage gray,
Brushes the thick-spun web of Night away, . .

he frees the King's spirit by means of an opiate, a cup of darkness mixed with one of light, from two streams flowing near. He also drinks from 'the mingled cup of heaven and hell', and is whirled away to a sunless region of such fantastic terror that he prays for the lowest plain of earth.

The poet now wanders through wild dark dells and thick forests (Milton's influence is obvious here) to a rock-strewn wilderness, where he is possessed by the bitterness of mutability.

What need

Glorious thought, or word, or deed,
When all mortal grandeur must
Lie with oblivion in the dust?

The power of the cup of darkness leads him, after further adventures, to the desert.

Solitude as deep and wide,
Treeless and herbless, never trod
Gray Triton underneath the tide,
Wandering the tawny barrens broad.
All is dumb, and the dead sands
Lie in long warps on both hands,
Furrows incult, or barely sown,
Like desecrate lands, with salt alone,
Seed of sterility! . . .

In this place he finds his symbol of 'most majestic sadness', the Unicorn, in his lonely pride partner with the Phoenix of 'proud solitude'. He is not the Unicorn of the *Beshaares*:

Lo! in the mute, mid wilderness,
 What wondrous Creature?—of no kind!—
 His burning lair, doth largely press—
 Gaze fixt—and feeding on the wind?
 His fell is of the desert dye,
 And tissue adust, dun-yellow and dry,
 Compact of living sands; his eye,
 Black luminary, soft and mild,
 With its dark lustre cools the wild;
 From his stately forehead springs
 Piercing to heaven, a radiant horn,—
 Lo! the compeer of lion-kings!
 The steed self-armed, the Unicorn!
 Ever heard of, never seen,
 With a main of sands between
 Him and approach; . . .

It is obvious, as Darley tells us, that he had not finished with the subject-matter of the second canto. Just after he has introduced his symbol the poem ends with a return to its starting-point. The poet, exhausted in spirit, now thinks with affection of the 'calm, dear, humble, native soil' he has deserted. He longs to return, and 'repose from pursuit of what is unattainable, and from life itself'.

References to *Nepenthe* occur in later letters which we will not anticipate. For the rest of 1835 Darley was occupied in reviewing a number of miscellaneous books for the *Athenæum*. To that periodical he also contributed for some years occasional short poems, many of which have not been reprinted. There is a letter of the 23rd of October to Cary, who is addressed as 'Dear Receptacle of the Soul of Dante'. In it Darley makes suggestions for improvement in three passages of Cary's translation, one of which was adopted and acknowledged. He goes on to say, 'I know you are jealous of my translating powers (so eminently shown in the *Orpheus*), & therefore I send you these *Bentleiana* to provoke you', and subscribes himself 'Depôt of the Spirit of *Zoilus*'. It is probable, from this and other references, that he attempted translations which Cary criticized. The letter has an interesting postscript: 'Miss Lamb spent a day at Moxon's, and is sufficiently well. Moxon says he thinks you might go to see her

at Enfield. She has left his house for her own ²¹ Two other notes to Cary, that cannot be dated with any certainty, may be mentioned here. In one of them the Reverend Filch, after being chaffed on his ignorance of prosody, is accused of stealing a pocket handkerchief as a way of reimbursing himself for hospitality: the other is a request that Cary will read an ode on which Darley wants praises if he can get them, but opinions at any rate.

Monckton Milnes returned to England from Rome in the summer of 1835, a date which marks the close of what Julius Hare calls his 'vagabondising' on the Continent. He continued his friendship with Darley. The second of the following letters is characteristic of several other notes to Milnes in which Darley makes plain his disinclination to accept kindly intended social invitations.

(To R. M. Milnes, Esq^r.)

49 Albemarle St.

Monday)

[No date or address.]

Monday [16 Nov. 1835]

Did you get my letter sent to Yorkshire?

Come by all means when you can cut the apron string. Why not say you'll take *tea* with me this evening—I shall be at home in expectation & my garret. So don't come if your breathing be short. Let me know when you will venture—any time but tomorrow Ev^g, when I probably go to the Opera with Westenra. Of course I will call on you in *M^r Murray's Street* today at about 2 or so—but don't attend me, whatever apron or petticoat string you may be tied with.

Your's ever,

George Darley.

I had better not call till tomorrow, as I see on re-reading your note that your Mother & Sister have but just arrived & therefore wish you their's uninterruptedly. Excuse hurry & hieroglyphics

[On cover] Send up your name if you call, as I keep most people out

(To R. M. Milnes, Esq^r.)

49 Albemarle Street)

[No date or address.]

(Postmark 18 Nov. 1835.)

My dear Milnes,

You have done me one kindness in asking me to dinner, and must do me another in letting me off. My impediment is I own a nightmare and a daymare I can never get rid of. Do not call this feeling a second edition

* Enfield is almost certainly a mistake for Edmonton, where, on 3 December 1835, Crabb Robinson visited Mary Lamb. Charles Lamb had died on 29 December 1834. Edward Moxon, the publisher, had married Lamb's adopted daughter, Emma Isola, on 30 July 1833.

of Byron's folly—his defect was merely personal, mine gives a mental deformity which is not only humiliating to me and repulsive to others, but a positive bar to social enjoyment.

I am aware how ill-bred & thankless your Family must consider this refusal—yet I pay them the highest compliment in reckoning on their kindness to forgive even it. Let them believe me sufficiently punished in not being able to cultivate the acquaintance of those whom I so much esteem and admire.

Your's ever most obliged,

Tuesday Ev^g.

George Darley

Such morbid self-consciousness made friendship with Darley a difficult art. He afterwards regretted his faint-heartedness on this occasion; fortunately the kindly efforts of Milnes to deliver him from himself were not easily denied. Sometimes, however, he took other and more hazardous means of testing the esteem, and patience, of his friends than by refusing their invitations to dinner. In the following curious episode he assumes the aggressive part of candid critic to Allan Cunningham, with whom he was on terms of intimacy. He strongly objected to statements made in Cunningham's life of Sir Joshua Reynolds,¹ and in reviewing a new edition of the artist's literary works, to which a memoir was attached,² found it necessary to state his objections in print. A delicate situation was thus created which would have interested Henry James. The average man would probably say that Darley showed a singular ignorance of human nature, or a deep understanding of his friend's character. His action has wide implications. It shows how far he was prepared to go in his pursuit of truth. Life on such terms, especially a literary life, was not likely to be easy.

(To Allan Cunningham.)

Monday, 1 Feb. [1836].

My dear Allan,

I told you I'd abuse you for your Life of Sir Joshua—so transmit you the MS. that you may cut out any of the Billingsgate you don't like. I am a man that cannot measure my words, and indeed live so much out of the world that I do not know how words meaning no offence are translated there. After all, my charge against you is nothing beyond prepossession, and error of judgment, to which we are all liable.

I know too that the painters and picture-lovers are mortally offended

¹ Included in *The Lives of the Most Eminent British Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, vol. 1, 1829

² *The Literary Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds, with a Memoir of the Author*, by Henry William Beechey

with your memoir—so my onslaught may give you an occasion for defence against all your opponents at once.

N.B. There is a page or so more in the same spirit as those you see, but containing a final paragraph which does full justice to your intentions and talents.

However, I would prefer never writing another line to passing unkind censure upon one of your's. — Ever your well-wisher, and warm-hearted as hot-headed friend,

George Downright.

Pray send the MS. after revisal to Dilke as soon as possible—he wants it for this week

(To Allan Cunningham)

Monday Evg [1 Feb. 1836].

My dear Allan,

Your answer is precisely what I expected from your noble heart. I have sent the review to press, as you make no maternal objection, and as I do think you deserve just such a *soft scoring*. Instead of harm it will do you good, like all other chastisement from a friend. As to the appearance of personality, it will vanish by means of the additional paragraph, and there will be two pages more all devoted to Beechey, whose 'Life' is but a fourth part of the publication —

Yours, as ever,

G D.

There is a lack of courteous consideration in Darley's handling of the matter, even though he had no shadow of a wish to wound. He could have said what he wanted to say without risking unpleasantness and with no sacrifice of honesty. It is Cunningham, as far as we can judge, who emerges from the affair with credit. There is, it is true, an undercurrent of depreciation in his life of Reynolds. He refers to the artist's cold and cautious nature, his ostentation, and the sluttish abundance of his table. Reynolds the man makes a poor figure in his pages, though there is a manifest intention to write fairly. For many of his judgements on the artist he has the authority of Hazlitt. He remarks that Reynolds's constant advice to study the 'grand style' and choose heroic subjects has had unfortunate results; he regards the dictum, 'study the great works of the great masters for ever', as contrary to the character of English art and taste. But the account is by no means an essay in depreciation. Darley, however, felt with some reason that one of his few gods, the greatest English painter, had been maligned. Beechey's memoir he dismisses as of no account. Beechey's purpose, he states, should have been to defend Reynolds

from the attacks of an earlier Philistine with something more trenchant than a bulrush. He concentrates his attention on the 'popular little work' that has given 'a tone almost as dark as the frown of Hatred herself to the public aspect towards Sir Joshua Reynolds . . . From the first page to the last we feel, in touching upon the subject of that memoir, as if we were handling a snake.' It is, he says, a question of general principles in biography, not a desire to whitewash the artist, that compels him to write. There may be documents that warrant the statements made; if so, since truth is sovereign, they should be produced. 'In compiling memoirs, we look upon it as unwarrantable to pronounce opinions, or declare impressions, without stating facts, or producing documents, substantial and conclusive.' He rebuts the charge of rapacity brought against Reynolds and pleads that the words and deeds of the dead should be interpreted with kindness of spirit unless facts forbid. On such grounds he asks for another life of the artist from Cunningham himself, without mentioning him by name, and proceeds to reconcile public criticism and friendship.

'A sense of duty and justice, we hope, has alone been our prompter. Any personal motives cannot have actuated us in our opinion of the memoir impugned; for its author is a man whom we love, honour, and esteem. Nay, our censure of his work lends, and will lend, a double weight to the praise we have often bestowed, and must have to bestow, upon his other publications. Even here we have as little misdoubted his intentions as his talents; disgust at what he conceived a selfish, a servile, and a sordid character, made him describe it as such, honestly, though, we think erroneously.'

The qualifying praise is, without intent, too pontifical. The review was, of course, unsigned.¹

Though Cunningham made no 'material' objection to his

¹ Along with this episode may be mentioned another. Writing in December 1845, Darley says, 'By the bye do you know if Margaret Hutton is the translator of a *second* volume of the German Work on Painting (Kugler's) which I criticized for the *Athenaeum* a few years since? This 2nd vol. I see will soon be published—I am glad to be out of the way, lest it should fall into Fadladeen's* hands as reviewer, and they should maul *my first love* again.' He reviewed the first volume, 'translated by a lady', in three articles during March 1842, and suggested that much of Kugler's confusedness and loose phraseology (faults duly instanced) might be due to his translator.

* Fadladeen is one of Darley's whimsical signatures. See T. Moore's *Lalla Rookh*. Fadladeen, the bombastic and omniscient chamberlain of the harem, 'was a judge of everything'.

chastisement, it is improbable that the relations between the two men retained their cordiality. One person, at least, emphatically disapproved of Mr. Darley's censure—Mrs. Cunningham. Her indignation was natural.

(To Allan Cunningham.)

27 Upper Eaton St
Sat^y Ev^g [c March^y 1836]

My dear Allan,

I should have sent you Joseph's intelligent letter before, but have only just now had time to scan it particularly myself—it will no doubt interest you all at home, tho' you have of course heard from him yourself. He does not find, it would seem, a nabobship quite so easy of acquisition as in the good old times of Rumbold and Clive—however, perhaps it is better for his mind as well as his soul that he should make his fortune by engineering rather than embezzlement and extortion. His letter shews you he is in high scientific trust

I met all of a certain lady to-day but her eyes—yet they counted the hairs in my hat and whiskers, perused everything about my face, just to let me see that the face itself was not to be acknowledged! This is the cut direct to which she has been coming ever since I abused her husband—tho I asked leave never so courteously! What a daft wife! Well, I must wait till he gives me an occasion (which he surely will soon) to praise him with as bold a voice, and so reinstate myself perhaps in her favour—Ever yours with steadfast 'love, honor, and esteem',

George Darley.

In this case, we fear, it is the man who was daft. Did he expect the lady to abound in smiles and thanks? If the following notes are rightly placed here, they bear witness, in the substitution of 'Cunningham' for 'Allan', to a change in the relations of the two friends.

(To Allan Cunningham.)

[No date or address.]
[1836?]¹

My dear Cunningham,

Tho' an Irishman, I have not the immodesty to think myself capable of the task your kind opinion, as kind as it is erroneous, would impose on me. I can merely scramble at the sense of a Latin book. Shall I add you know not what you ask? Our best scholars consider Latin Epitaphs to be of most arduous composition. The learned Canons of Christ

¹ Bertram Dobell says that on these two notes the year 1836 was pencilled, perhaps by Cunningham. We have not discovered whose epitaph is in question. It can hardly concern Charles Lamb, for whose tomb Cary wrote an inscription. Cunningham was interested in Flaxman, and may have referred to the sculptor. Peter Cunningham was secretary to the committee formed to purchase a statue of Flaxman (see advertisement in *Athenaeum*, 18 May 1844). It is a remote possibility that these notes are addressed to him, and not to his father.

Church only write a sort of dog (or rather *hog*) Latin, which would puzzle the Prodigal son himself, with all his knowledge of Swine language to make out.

But let me do a far more friendly office than attempting to write the version myself—namely, direct you to a competent scholar—our friend Cary—a poet also and writer, who knows the necessities of each department. Should you feel any reluctance to ask the favour of him, I will do so in your name, tho' believing your own request would be more influential,—Ever yours, as far as my possible, George Darley.
Up-getting time—Friday

(To Allan Cunningham)

[No date or address]
[1836?]

My dear Cunningham,

Without the same excuse, our friend Cary had the same reluctance as myself to undertake the Epitaph I hope however to have prevailed on him Where little *honor* is to be gained, most persons dread exposure to a whole posterity of carping Cantabs and Oxonians, by Latin which may be very good yet not *monumental*. I do think nevertheless that Cary will oblige us both, else he would not have allowed me to leave the original with him —Ever yours,

G. D.

Monday even^g.

The next letter to Milnes, which attempts to woo the young man from his cult of Wordsworth, ends with the weary despondency of a sick man It also contains a hint of another outspoken review which made some stir at the time—that on Talfourd's tragedy *Ion*.

(To R. M. Milnes, Esq. Jun.

Frystone, Yorkshire.

Ferrybridge.)

Clarence Club, 12 Waterloo Place—
where I occasionally retreat
from the blue devils of Pimlico.
(Postmark 3 March 1836.)

My dear Milnes,

I do not know if you are aware of the compliment paid your Sonnet by the Athenæum—rejection. In very truth I subscribe to the award, whatever may be my opinion of the Sonnet or its author. It was so determinately temporal as almost to deprecate immortality. Milton indeed may devote his verses to a 'Virtuous Young Lady', but it takes a huge magnifying power of mind to transform a grain of sand into a mountain. And that same power if employed on the mountain would make it pro-

portionately sublime Shall I never scold you out of your love for the atomic theory in your poems? Why invert the rules of creation, & pronounce only the mean magnificent, while you consider the lofty beneath your notice? You revive the Egyptian idolatry by thus deifying leeks & water-lilies, irrational & insignificant objects. This was very good as a novelty—and there is no reason that humble nature as well as exalted should not have its poet. But as *a system* it can never succeed It will only draw the spine out of poetry, & leave it dragging. Do, take a course of intellectual tonics against this Wordsworthian rabies There is an excellent Spa which I could recommend, strongly tinctured with iron,—‘the well of English undefiled’ in Warwickshire I do hope your forthcoming poems are not after the fashion of Old Wordy! As sure as they are, may flies will be methusalems in comparison Except his own, I do not recollect a single eternal piece of verse on the same system. None live I believe much beyond the life of a newspaper. Perhaps I am forgetful, but as far as my remembrance serves me, the hoariest poem of the kind became antiquated in a week. Be amenable, & follow nature instead of a Westmoreland dry-nurse Consult the God within you, not an idol outside: observe the commandments of that, not the bleatings of this. By the bye, *are* your poems on the slip? Can I do ought to forward them? Or have you thought of coming to Crocodilopolis yourself? I have seen no more of Tennyson’s verses than the one little volume—nor indeed *any*, save my own, which alternate with the Meteorological Tables in the poetic column of the Athenæum Yes, from the Quarterly I caught two or three passages of Talfourd’s ‘Ion’—a penny critic wd say they were ‘gems’ of great ‘power’. Have you seen the work, which I am told is not published but circulated underhand like a bawdy song?¹ One or two similes I thought pretty enough, but too much kneaded out. Poetic flashes any more than blades of lightning are not to be forged. There is no sending after such ideas with a search warrant, or the mind retires to its cells & shuts itself up there. Dont you agree—for once? Lash the imagination & like a flying serpent it falls broken-backed to the ground. However I must read more of Ion before applying all this to it. The author a learned Sergeant!—I cannot help prophesying it must be Euripides put into curl. Did you ever hear of a great lawyer-poet,—except Counsellor Phillips? Indeed lawyer or not, there seems to be something altogether antagonistic between powdered wigs & poetry. You see our perukes of Charles’ & Anne’s time did not cover a single poetic skull—but almost hatched *wit* out of the particles of pomatum, let the brain have been ever so barren. I am wandering.

How are all my Venetian acquaintances? I hope La Signorina does not suffer from drawing in the ‘rank mist’ of Yorkshire This London to be sure is a most foul & pestilent congregation of vapours—especially

¹ There were two editions of *Ion* privately printed in 1835. To the second a few sonnets were added.

since so much virulent political breath has been uttered. One might as well inhale the atmosphere of a dragon's nest—venom furnaced but in a bloodred vapour from nostrils & mouths & every pore of the brood. But what a dunce was I to coy off from said Albemarle Street friends till the last five minutes! They set me so much at ease by their delightful carelessness. I trust your Mama does not forget the important service I rendered in packing her reticule, & that a due sense of gratitude is entertained by Miss H for my locking her valise which you, with all your Herculean faculties, were unable to accomplish. See what it is to have preferred Shakespeare to Wordsworth!

I have done little or nothing since that gang of gypsy imaginations, Nepenthe Having to pick up my food, like a city sparrow, from the kennels of highway literature, one half of my time goes mentally profitless. Headache, my crown of thorns, as good as reduces the other half to a quarter, & this residue I have to make myself immortal! I am afraid my ambition burns low along with the vital flame. Broken in health & spirits, renown almost begins to have a rainbow value—brilliant little bubbles making a magnificent gewgaw, that drops to earth while it seems hung amid the heavens To be sure, ill-success is a plentiful source of philosophy—you will say I am turning Stoic malgré moi as to fame But you will say yet better, that there is a far more exalted object for mental ambition than mere *human* immortality—one which retains its sublime station however wisdom may lead us to condemn the other. True, my dear Milnes, that is the winged aspiration which bears me up, notwithstanding the load of sickness, sorrow, & chagrin that wd else bury me for ever in the Slough of Despond.

Pray give my kindest respects to all your Family Write thro' Westenra, whose address I give you on this page. If you have written any other sonnet or short poem you think I'd like, enclose it me. Dont be above my advice—you see how I submitted to your's in the '*firm* of rich waters'!

Excuse haste. Ever your's,

George Darley

[Hon H. R. Westenra, M.P , The Dell Cottage, Windsor]

Darley reviewed *Ion* for the *Athenæum* when the tragedy was published by Moxon in 1836. The play achieved a great success at its production—on 26 May, the author's birthday—owing to the acting of Macready and Ellen Tree; Darley's review appeared two days later. His remarks, headed *Dramatic Genius*, begin in the vein of John Lacy. Drama in England is not only dead but annihilated The age, luxuriating in the softer affections, the gentler ecstasies and domestic beatitudes, with a feminine poetic genius devoted to the embroidery and elegant flowerwork of the mind, is, he holds, unsuited to drama. The author of *Ion* writes

from the overflow of an amiable and affectionate spirit, but that fact alone cannot produce a good drama. His play is full of domestic imagery. 'We do not contend against this modern worship of the household gods—this self-evolving style of meditation—this perpetual hymn and hosanna about the altar of social love, in praise of the soft-eyed charities and affections that preside over human happiness.' But these things are only part of life. Moreover, he points out, *Ion* is essentially undramatic, has little interest of plot, and no power in revealing character. Then, doubtless misunderstanding Talfourd's motives, he proceeds to a scathing attack on the manner in which the play had made its appearance. Copies of the two editions of 1835, with prefaces 'plentifully bestrown with compliments to persons of influence', had been sent, though privately printed, to the principal reviews. This procedure Darley holds to be underhand. 'We regard all such attempts to forestall criticism—to create a fictitious interest—to court a backstairs favour, as unworthy a man of real genius . . .' True words, most of them, but not such as any author would enjoy reading in the first flush of success.

Talfourd and his friends were naturally angry. Part of their displeasure fell, according to his own statement, on H. F. Chorley, the musical critic of the *Athenæum*, to whom Talfourd at first attributed the offensive article. Chorley had expressed great admiration for *Ion* and was introduced to its author by Lady Blessington. After Darley's review the *Athenæum* was hateful to Talfourd, and he seems to have suggested that Chorley should withdraw from that paper if he thought the criticism unfair. The result was, says Chorley, that he forfeited Talfourd's good opinion and was for years decried by the dramatist's friends. Darley's remarks were not allowed to pass unchallenged. *The New Monthly Magazine* published a most appreciative review of *Ion*, rejoicing in the tragedy's decisive stage success. The writer of the unsigned article, John Forster, was able to quote from an unpublished scene by Landor. After analysing the beauties of the play he alludes to the 'lively critic' who has denied that modern dramatists can write with simple energy, and asks whether he can 'bring forth from his vaunted, and we might venture to add, little relished or appreciated stores' words so full of intensity as those he quotes. An intentional misunderstanding of Darley's allusion to classical drama provides opportunity for a sneer and the introduction of Landor's name. On the whole, however, little space is given to

Darley, and the writing is nowhere so truculent and bitter as his own. He alludes to the matter in the following letter to Milnes, where we return to the question of *Nepenthe*. It is pleasant to know, on the authority of Chorley's biographer, that Darley was later on friendly terms with Talfourd.

(To R. M. Milnes)

[No address or date]
[July ? 1836]

My dear Friend,

I will not accept your invitation. Have I not made heroic attempts enough to overcome my sheepishness, and all with one effect? I do feel so much pain, moral & physical, from my awkwardness & impotence, that the smell of ambrosia should not tempt me to your *déjeuné* again. I only disgrace & misrepresent myself by endeavoring to talk, not having what the Frenchman called *le beau talent pour le silence*. You must write me answers to my queries about Rio.¹

Do you see how the Savage of the New Monthly treats my poor little innocuous article on *Ion*?² What a horde of cannibals must stable in in Great Marlboro' Street, at Colburn's menagerie!

Ever most kindly your's
George Darley.

Everyone tells me my 'Nepenthe' is so nebulous, that I have been forced to write a series of headings for each page—you shall have another copy with the said explanations, which will shew you there *was* a 'heart in my mystery' if anyone had been at the trouble to 'pluck it out'.

(To R. M. Milnes, Esq)

[No address or date]
[July ? 1836]

My dear Milnes

In giving the former copies of *Nepenthe* to friends, I quite forgot that its author was an obscure scribbler, and that no one could be expected to take the trouble of making out the *mythos* of his work if it were much more recondite than that of an Esop's fable. And the *mythos* of a sorry little pamphlet poem, (unfinished too!)—how should I have supposed this worth looking for? Craniologists tell me I have the bump of ideality much developed—whence no doubt the said error of imagination. But

¹ Alexis François Rio, friend of Milnes and known to Carlyle. The first part of Rio's work, *De la Poésie chrétienne dans son principe, dans sa matière et dans ses formes (De l'Art Chrétien)*, Darley reviewed later in the *Athenæum*. The book had a considerable influence on Ruskin, who read it in the winter of 1844. It determined him to revisit Italy and study the early Christian painters, and the tour of 1845 has been called the turning-point in his career.

² *The New Monthly Magazine*, July 1836, 'Evidences of Genius for Dramatic Poetry, No II', deals with Talfourd's *Ion*. No I is the well-known appreciation of Browning's *Paracelsus*, and No III praises the work of Landor. Leigh Hunt's Three Sonnets to the author of *Ion* appeared in the August number.

simpleton that I am, the very truth is—I thought my moral (which nobody it seems can make out) was *self-evident*! Not that I thought, nor intended, Nepenthe to be milestone reading—but at least plain enough in these days of transcendentalism, when every other person you meet is an Œdipus. Again however I own that, being esteemed a mere fancy-monger, I should not have expected anyone to put on his metaphysical spectacles for me. The headings now written over each page will perhaps make all intelligible. In short, the key of my whole poem is this—to shew the folly of discontent with the natural tone of human life. Canto I means to shew the deleterious effects of ultra-natural joy, tho' imbibed from heaven itself, Canto II, those of ultra-natural melancholy, imbibed from the regions whose comfort is darkness & consolation bewailment. I must acknowledge that both developments are imperfect in these fragmentary Cantos—great part especially of the second object has to be worked out in Canto III—which will also conclude with exhibiting the advantageous results of the mingled joy & melancholy imbibed from the native fountain of humanity.

Knowing your taste in poetry so opposite to mine, I do not hope to make you like my Nepenthe—but merely wish you would read the headings above mentioned, that you may see I *had* some object beyond exhaling my vapours of imagination. In fact I think all poets who have not in their works a moral end (direct or indirect), little more respectable than so many flower-gardeners.

Your bookseller has sent me an imperfect copy of Rio's work—and I am at a full stop. Half sheet 15 is omitted. I can do nothing till supplied.

Your's wishing you a forest of laurel

Thursday

George Darley

Such fiercely honest views as those expressed by Darley in the *Athenæum* strike a note of independence rare at that time. He allowed, it is evident, no personal considerations to stand in the way of truth as he conceived it. This habit of mind and manner of writing no doubt account in part for his comparative isolation. He must have offended many by his outspoken pen. Criticism was no pleasure to him, but since he had to earn money he wrote criticisms, not 'puffs'. He praised the good, and his praise was worth having; he executed the bad without mercy. There is something noble in his integrity, and in his relentless efforts to exclude the pretentious from the approaches to literature. He was well equipped and took his work seriously. Whether writing of books or pictures he made astonishingly few mistakes in judgement. But it is easy to see that such a critic was not likely to be popular. Procter says that 'he was—without possessing ill-nature—of a sarcastic turn'. From that statement it is but a step to the

legend of disappointed author deaf of set purpose to the merits of others.

Procter it was, or Cary, who was responsible for enrolling the kind and courageous Miss Mitford among Darley's correspondents in the summer of 1836. Writing to a friend in 1840 Miss Mitford says that she has never seen the poet, but hears 'he is a very elegant and excellent person'. In her talkative manner she then dips into the pool of feminine exaggeration

'I should think him a most interesting man if it were not that his own disappointment, in not being acknowledged as one of the great poets of the age, has produced the most intolerant fastidiousness and determination to disallow all merit in other writers—such writers as Scott and Wordsworth, for instance, and indeed every poet in every language, except Shakespeare and Milton'

And, she adds pathetically, 'He calls Miss Barrett mediocre. He cannot think so' Miss Mitford's name is one of the sweet herbs in the English garden. She may easily be forgiven the touch of romance because she was the first to find virtue in *Nepenthe*, though it was an intoxication that turned her brain. Nor did she waver in the belief that the author was a poet

Darley sent copies of *Sylvia* and *Nepenthe* to Miss Mitford, perhaps at her request. She replied in a letter touched with enthusiasm. He, in his turn, elated by the taste of praise that was neither faint nor dull, wrote to her from an overflowing heart, with the gratitude and delight of a starved man who has, at last, been given wine and a little food.

(To Miss Mitford.)

8, Beaumont Street, Oxford
August 22 [1836].

I cannot refrain, even at the risk of egotism, dear Miss Mitford, from expressing my pleasure and pride at your reception of my sorry little poetical tract '*Nepenthe*'. Praise in general is to me more painful than censure, compliments as formal as those of 'the season' from visitors, the frozen admiration of friends, I shudder in the heart at all this; but one word of real enthusiasm such as yours is happiness, hope, and inspiration to me. Such as yours, I say, for when, together with being enthusiastic, praise is discriminative, it becomes to me what a feather is to an eaglet; argue as we will, the spirit cannot soar without it Mine has been, I confess, for a long time like one of Dante's sinners, floating and buckering about in the shape of a *fiery tongue* on the Slough of Despond. If it ever has risen, 'twas an *ignis fatuus* for a moment only. Seven long years did I live on a charitable saying of Coleridge's, that he sometimes liked to

take up 'Sylvia'. What you say of her and 'Nepenthe' will keep the pulse of hope (which is the life of the spirit) going, so that I shall not die inwardly before the death of the flesh. Many do, it is my firm belief, who, alas! have had still more ambition, and less success than I. Murder is done every night upon genius by neglect and scorn. You may ask, could I not sustain myself on the strength of my own approbation? But it might be only my vanity, not my genius, that was strong. Pye and Cibber no doubt did so, concerted themselves writing for posterity, which indeed they were—for its *ridicule*. Milton and Wordsworth are not instances; they had from the first many admirers, though far from as many as they deserved. Have not I, too, had some, however few, approvers? Why, yes, but their chorus in my praise was as small as the voice of my conscience, and, like it, served for little else than to keep me uneasy. You see, I am shriving myself to you, as if, like the Lady of Loretto, you were *made* of indulgences.

Do not, I know you will not, let me lose your esteem for thus avowing the 'last infirmity'. Milton, you remember, excuses it. I could defend it too. There are the stars as well as the bubbles of ambition, the one brightly solid, and exalted, and 'age remaining', the other glittering, short-lived inanities of our own low sphere. Should we not endeavour to approach towards the most High in *all* His perfections, intelligence as well as goodness? Believe me, I am far above the vulgar desire for *popularity*. I have none of that heartburn. Indeed who of any pride but must feel as high as scorn above public praise when we see on what objects it is lavished? Should I stand a hairbreadth more exalted in my own esteem by displacing for a day such or such a poetaster from his pedestal? But, candidly, judicious praise is grateful to me as frankincense, partly no doubt for the love of fame, born with us like our other appetites, and greatly do I feel from its being the proof that my supposed path towards the Centre of Light is not an aberration. To seek, and to keep such path should be everyone's immortal object, because there alone is he the best co-efficient in advancing himself and the human system. Here you have my intellectual creed, how it should have come into such a letter I cannot tell, but I have seldom the power to direct my mind, and must *only* follow it.

You are quite right about 'Sylvia'¹; the grotesque parts offend grievously against good taste. I acknowledge the error, and deplore it. But the truth is my mind was born among the rude old dramatists, and has imbibed some of their *ogre* milk, which gave more of its coarseness than strength to my efforts. And again 'Sylvia' was written in the gasping times of laborious scientific engagements. All its prose especially was what a boiling brain first threw up to the surface, mere scum, which I never intended to pass for cream. Your distinction as to this gratifies me much, not because it is ingenious, any critic can take an ingenious

¹ Miss Mitford had read *Sylvia* a few months before.

exception, but because it is just, beyond all, your preference for 'Nepenthe', an unpublished sketch, to 'Sylvia', a completed poem, gives me confidence in your judgment. It shows me you have, what is so difficult to meet with, a substantive, self-existent taste for *poetry itself*, when you can thus like storyless abstraction better than a tale of some (though little) human interest—not that the latter should be unappreciated where it occurs, but it *alone* is usually thought of.

This brings me to your advice about undertaking a subject of both natures, the imaginative and the real. Such indeed always is, always should be, the scope of a truly Catholic poet. But, alas! I fear myself but a poor sectarian. The double mind seems wanting in me; certainly the double experience, for I have none of mankind. My whole life has been an abstraction, such must be my works. I am, perhaps you know, labouring under a visitation much less poetic than that of Milton and Mæonides, but quite as effective, which has made me for life a separatist from society—

From the ways of cheerful men
Cut off, and for the book of knowledge fair
Presented with *each other page* a blank,
And wisdom at one entrance quite shut out.

Indeed, were my knowledge of humanity less confused than it is, I apprehend myself to be still too much one-minded for the making a proper use of it. Do you not expect so from 'Nepenthe'? Does it not speak a heat of brain mentally Bacchic? I feel a necessity for intoxication (don't be shocked, I am a mere tea-drinker) to write with any enthusiasm and spirit. I must think intensely or not at all. Now, if this be the case, if my mind be only occasional, intermittent, collapsive, which (unaffectedly impartial) I think it is, how should I conduct the *detail* of a story where poetic *furor* were altogether out of place? It is a great defect, I own, but my genius (as you call it) never enables me to sustain a subject, the subject must sustain *it*. I do so despise the pretension to omniscience and omnipotence now in vogue! This it is that makes us so feeble and shallow; will not the streams run deeper and stronger in one than many channels? But, besides, my health is an indifferent one, a tertian headache consumes more of my life than sleep does, and, worse than this, not only wasting it, but wearing it down. And I have to scribble every second day for means to prolong this detestable headachy life, to criticize and review, committing *literary fratricide*, which is an iron that enters into my soul, and doing what disgusts me, not only with that day, but the remaining one. All these things, and want of confidence still more than they, keep me a long letter-writer at your service. I have neither time nor inclination for aught else. Not but that I can show various first acts, introductory cantos, etc.—could *paper* hell with my good intentions—and have several folios only to be copied out of the parchment of my

brain; the like interruptions and misgivings, however, cut them all down to such performances as 'Nepenthe'. Your praise indeed almost touches my lips with fire, and I could begin to utter the flame of song. After having viewed a subject sufficiently, I will dedicate it without fail to *you*, if you will permit, as the resuscitator of 'Sylvia', and the raiser of my own spirits on earth. But for you, both might as well have been at the bottom of the Dead Sea

I write at this fearful length because it is the only way, dear Miss Mitford, in which I can ever have unpainful communion with any friend. My impediment is, as it were, a hideous mask upon my mind which not only disfigures, but nearly suffocates it. Yet I hope we shall meet, for even letters are half unintelligible without the recollections of those who write them. Besides, I wish so much, and with a parent's fondness, to see the foster-mother of my 'Sylvia' and 'Nepenthe'. Egotism! egotism! from first to last this letter is all about myself. Another hateful result of a solitary life, it makes me very selfish. Indeed I doubt if it be not the mother of as many vices as Idleness, instead of so much *Wisdom*, and what not, it is said to hatch Swift, you know, says, 'There are many wretches who retire to solitude only that they may be with the devil in private!' Man is surely a most gregarious animal; we ought all to put our minds together as near as the other beasts do their noses. I say this to show you that my misanthropy is compelled, and that my mind has not *grown hairy* like that of many another anchorite, as well as his body. Your recommendation as to Mr Chorley has been in part followed. I wrote to him just before leaving London, and sent him your 'Nepenthe'. But, as to making his acquaintance, I could as soon 'eat a crocodile'. However, even this I could do bit by bit, and a new acquaintance of the *man* kind I get down in the same way. He (Mr. Chorley, not the crocodile) wrote me a most kind and encouraging answer. I well believe him all as amiable and intellectual as you represent him; upon my return to town I shall certainly visit him in my *mask*. When I do not know how to subscribe myself with all the warmth yet respect I feel, it is my habit simply to say,

Yours,

George Darley.

This cataract of revelation is a leading document in Darley's life. Its sincerity no one will doubt, but it would be a mistake to interpret prosaically what was written in hot blood. Darley, though a solitary, had worked hard, travelled widely, and mixed with men. His life, spiritual and physical, can in no sense be dismissed as an abstraction. He lived, at times, in a world of his own, as do most other people. The world of his creation was a wraith-like vision of ethereal loveliness, bearing little resemblance to earth, and peopled by shadowy ideal figures. Only occa-

sionally, though he strove, could he describe it. He was an out-and-out romantic, but in no sense a hermit, vowed to mysticism.

His letters, at all events, were substantial things. They threw the gentle Miss Mitford into a pretty flutter, frightened her not a little, and no wonder. She thought that letters should be cosy, domestic, tea-table chit-chat, written with slippered carelessness, whose natural adornments were blots and blunders. Such letters she wrote herself; and Darley would have rejoiced in her definition. That was his theory of letter-writing, duly impressed upon his feminine correspondents. He would have been distressed to know that Miss Mitford thought his elaborate epistles resembled 'the choicest parts of the choicest orations', and found them not only startling to receive but terrible to answer.

Before going to Oxford he wrote, at Miss Mitford's command, to her friend Chorley, and sent him a copy of *Nepenthe*. It was a little comedy that Miss Mitford had staged, the two men were 'snake and porcupine', so no doubt Chorley received his orders also. He thought himself injured by the review of *Ion*, and the year before he had been reprimanded by Dilke for naming Darley to Miss Mitford as the author of an article in the *Athenæum*. He was a solid rather than inspiring man, who had won a position of some authority by hard work. His musical criticism is of its time; he had no great *flair* for new work. But though he failed to understand Berlioz, he recognized the genius of the young César Franck.¹ As a reviewer he was honest, and he also wrote mediocre novels. Charles Cope the artist describes him as rather bumptious with 'red hair and eyelashes, a red necktie, and reddish leather boots', and reports that Charles Landseer said of him, 'Everything about Chorley was *red* but his *books*'. Darley's opinion of him may be gathered from his ungracious plunge into cold waters.

(To H. F. Chorley.)

27, Upper Eaton Street,
16th August [1836]

My dear Sir,

Forgive me when I confess that, most ignorantly and unjustly thinking you altogether devoted to the popular literature of the day, and that little sympathy could, therefore, exist between us, I have let pass opportunities for cultivating your acquaintance. Miss Mitford, by her letter, has shown me how far I was mistaken. My error will be excused, I have no doubt, as freely as it is acknowledged. Yours can be no common mind, to be in such amity with hers. I regret my inability to give you

¹ *Athenæum*, 15 Oct. 1842, p. 892.

any better proof of my conversion than the accompanying little pamphlet of a poem, printed for friends, but the same encouraging spirit tells me it will not be unacceptable. Some friends have complained, naturally enough, that an incomplete poem is rather unintelligible. I have, therefore, written explanatory headings; and may here add what is the general object or mythos of the poem: viz., to show the folly of discontent with the natural tone of human life. Canto I attempts to paint the ill-effects of over-joy, Canto II, those of excessive melancholy. Part of the latter object remains to be worked out in Canto III, which would likewise show—if I could ever find confidence, and health, and leisure to finish it—that contentment with the mingled cup of humanity is the true ‘Nepenthe’. I would call, or ask you to call, but that conversation with me is a painful effort, and to others painful and profitless. I am an involuntary misanthrope, by reason of an impediment which renders society and me burthensome to each other. My works, whatever be their merit, are the better part of me—the only one I can at all commend to your notice. I alone have to regret my state of interdiction.

Yours, my dear Sir,

With respect and the best impressions towards you,
George Darley

The reply bettered his expectations. How could he be deaf to any one who treated *Nepenthe* with consideration? In the next letter Miss Mitford’s experiment takes a big step towards success, and there is mention of two works by Darley that have disappeared.

(To H. F. Chorley.)

Thursday.
[Sept. ? 1836.]

My dear Chorley,

All my best thanks for your kind and careful remarks, which shall have my deepest consideration. They are the only ones I have ever yet obtained which enable me to turn my mind upon itself. Would they had come before I was dead in hope, energy, and ambition! If the ‘Lammergeyer’ now ten years old, be ever published, it will owe to you much of any success it may obtain, though I have not the slightest belief it will ever take even a ‘very low place among our select romantic poems’. You are perfectly right about ‘Albion’. The simple truth is, it was written as a mock-heroic tragedy, called ‘The Revisal’, by an imaginary mad dramatist, with a running prose critique by a manager, in which all your opinions of it were given. I, however, thought this plan foolish, and put one act into its present form, merely as an experiment, because it seemed to contain some few good lines. Whenever you please to put me in the chair, I promise to be as sincere as you, though not so judicious. Being such near neighbours, I think we should try the extent of each other’s hospitality. Mine goes as far as a breakfast of tea and coffee, two eggs

(or an equivalent broil), and buttered rolls *ad libitum*. Will you come Saturday, and at what hour? Or shall I put your 'barbarian virtue' to the test, as you are upon the *first floor*?

Ever yours obliged,

Had you rather have an *evening rout*.

George Darley

Darley's next letter to Miss Mitford records the progress of this friendship. Unfortunately no other letters from him either to her or Chorley seem to have survived. It is abundantly clear, however, that her encouragement, and Chorley's, came to him at a vital moment. These two friends were the sweet but insufficient good that came to him from *Nepenthe*. At a time of great despondency they renewed his faith in himself as poet, and restored the determination to pursue an implacable mistress. But he was now past forty, and his health was becoming more and more indifferent.

(To Miss Mitford.)

27, Upper Eaton St., Pimlico.
December 23, 1836.

I do not mean, dear Miss Mitford, to draw your eyes out with such an endless epistle as my last, written in perfect ignorance of your many anxious engagements, which were made known to me at the usual time of all desirable intelligence—a day too late. Yet I heard how much kind interest you had taken in my letter, so as almost to tempt me with writing you another *pandeck*. However, by good luck the many-tongued lady told me today you were steeped in tragedy to the very lips, and now that you are supping full with horrors, it will be savage to accumulate much more upon them in the shape of such grim hieroglyphics as mine.¹ The chief objects of all these presents is to wish you all the success you merit. May it come in a Sunburst of Glory and a Shower of Gold! A playhouse seems to me as melancholy as a catacomb, but I shall venture my anatomy there to witness your triumph. Laying an embargo on Mr. Forrest seems to have been most judicious: our native performers are salt that has lost its savour, him I have not seen, but am told that he has a new world vigour about him very impressive.² Again

¹ Miss Mitford's chief dramatic successes, *Julian* (1823, Macready), *Foscari* (1826, Charles Kemble), and *Rienzi* (1828, Young), were already won. In 1836 was published *Sodak and Kalasrade or the Waters of Oblivion*, a romantic opera in two acts, produced in 1835. In the summer of 1837 her *Country Stories*, 'a little trumpery volume', was issued.

² Edwin Forrest (1806-72), the American actor, made his English début at Drury Lane on 17 October 1836 in *The Gladiator* (Spartacus), by Dr. Bird. Shortly afterwards he had great success as Othello, Lear, Macbeth. His last appearance of the season was in the *Virginus* of Knowles (19 December). He returned to Drury Lane in February 1837, and on a later visit, in 1845, quarrelled with Macready.

do I wish you a joyful rise from that region of damnation where so many spirits have sunk for ever

I have also to return you with thanks the extracts you sent me, and to tell you I have taken, like a good patient (though with wry face enough), the new acquaintance you prescribed for me. Nothing ever went so much against the stomach of my inclination. I would as soon be ordered mummy. For the reason you know, all strange bodies are distasteful to me. At this one my gorge rose like Hamlet's at the empty cranium. Habits, manners, tastes, opinions, all so opposite. We had often met with the same *congeniality* as a snake and a porcupine. However, I was determined to be obedient, so on the first occasion went up, shook cold hands, and felt all day after as if burnt in the palm for treason against true-heartedness. But to drink the bitter cup of obedience to the dregs, I sent him my book as you ordered and stayed away myself, as I was not quite sure you forbade. Will you believe, after all this, that we are now such excellent friends I scarce can think we were ever anything else? He is everything you spoke him, nothing I thought him—clear-headed, sound-hearted, only as much too modern of mind as I am too antiquated, so you see it was no false modesty when I told you my ignorance of the world.¹ Will you accept the volume I send? It is my maiden publication² (its predecessor was my *childish* one), so demands all your tenderness to its deficiencies. Do not, I pray you, read the prose, in pity both to yourself and me, some of the verse, I am told, is better than I think it, and the latter too, let me beg in *Parliamentary* phrase, 'to be read this day six months'

Have you heard from the kind-hearted little Carys? Pray, if you write to them, remember me. I have been miserably ill for a long time, knocking at Death's door, but he had not the charity to take me in. Quite well now, so content to grovel on,

Ever yours, Miss Mitford,
With the greatest esteem and regard,
George Darley

Among the most interesting of Darley's literary reviews are three written in this year on Butler, Prior, and Johnson. He claims that Butler is a rhythmical artist who has not received justice though far superior to the Augustans. Neither Wordsworth, whose *Simpletonian* system develops all its weakness in octosyllabics, nor Scott, for all his Shakespearian genius, can compare with him in variety on his own ground. 'His double rhymes, and other liberties, are often resorted to for a purely modulative purpose; they account in great part for that per-

¹ Chorley received a presentation copy of *Thomas à Becket*, so the friendship certainly continued till 1840

² *The Labours of Idleness* (1826).

petual refreshment which his versification affords, though its law be so limited, and its chime tend so much to the monotonous. Beyond all, perhaps his frequent elisions serve to vary and relieve; they are like discords in music, which, resolving themselves back, render accord more grateful to the ear.' Had Hogarth written his pictures they would have been much in the style of *Hudibras*. Prior he finds grievously fallen from his high estate of ambassador to the *Grand Monarque* and plenipotentiary to the court of Apollo, leaving little of worth behind him. He is the beau-ideal of those rhyming wits who could pen to perfection a copy of genteel verses to *Mrs. Cynthia* or a sly apologue, but whose 'rural imagery seems all taken from fans and fire-screens—their characters have the smell of rappee and pulvilio—their passion walks upon high-heeled pumps—their rhythm, with a neat cluck-clack, upon pat-tens. We always conceive of them as writing their very sublimest things in a bed-gown, over the chocolate table, to be read that evening at *Will's*, before an awful coterie of gold-headed canes and snuff-boxes; or next forenoon, perhaps, by the bed-side of some reigning toast, after her billet-doux, and receipts for a wash or pomatum.'

His appreciation of Johnson is individual and excellent. After remarking on the mediocrity of Johnson's ideas and his cumbersome phraseology in terms similar to those used by Mr. H. G. Wells of the later Henry James—'Such gigantic convolutions of phrase about the minutest objects might be likened to a boa-constrictor endeavouring to strangle an emmet, or a whale to catch a shrimp with the flexure of his body'—he says:

'In conclusion' after all that has been said for Johnson as a literary judge, a sage, a lexicographer of forty-Frenchmen power, a *Brontites* of eloquence, the right arm of his genius was undoubtedly wit, conversational wit, . . . In wisdom, he was but a simular Solomon, in philosophy, we doubt if he would have drawn such remote consequences as Hume, or brought multifarious erudition to such a burning focus upon proper points as Gibbon, his Dictionary subsists like a Papacy, a venerable pile of absurdities and errors; his eloquence is a vice of language—but his wit, quick, cleaving, and poignant, full of imagination, learned allusion, humour, and savage jocularity, was admirable and tremendous. He spoke earthquakes, and spat forth central fire. Here he stood indeed a Hercules. Thus power of head it was that made him, as it were, the battering-ram of society, which he browbeat till it fell prostrate before him. Perhaps little else is requisite to prove wit his forte, than the circumstance of its flowing from him in such free and simple language,

while his wisdom, however extempore, came like frozen water, in a rattle of disjointed fragments, from a fountain. What else but his wit enabled him to create such a circle of respect everywhere round him, when shown about like a sagacious elephant to the illiterate Gael, or pointed at as a 'Big Sam' for the gates of Fame by whispering courtiers? He will ever be dear to the English nation, because such a type of itself . . . No country, save England, could have produced a Johnson, a Hogarth, or a Cobbett. . . '

The illness that followed Darley's visit to Oxford was more serious than the tertian headache that was always with him. He was at Oxford for about six weeks in August and September, and he described his visit in three papers, delayed by his indisposition, published in the *Athenæum* for December. They are not among his happier efforts, as he himself recognized. His impressions of the colleges, their architecture and pictures, are not personal enough. There is too much of guide-book detail in them. But he captures the spirit of one spot made fragrant by later associations.

'Down the woodlands on the left you descend into old, old, dry-walled, tottering, timeworn Hincksey. This most Arcadian village, as secluded as a wood-pigeon's nest, as tranquil as the grotto of Silence, the home of none but simplest peasantry, is scarce the flit of a butterfly from Oxford, that great laboratory of mind—

Not a bow-shot from the College,
Half the globe from sense and knowledge!

Happy Hincksey!—the Tree of Knowledge is still fatal, and whoever tastes of its fruit his state of paradisiacal simplicity expires. Once more then, happy Hincksey! Up and down its stony lanes, and by its limpid, light-footed stream, the only babbler to be heard in the place, along its gray, mossy-bearded, mouldering walls, I wandered for hours through a solitude as deep as that of a savannah!'

Some further details of Oxford and his illness are given in letters to Milnes to which we shall turn back. It is time, however, that we attempted to give an account of Darley's writings on art that will sufficiently show the importance of his theories and practice. To this subject the next chapter is devoted.

VII

THE CRITIC OF ART

DARLEY was a contributor to the *Athenæum* from the beginning of 1834 till his death in 1846, and the most important part of his prose writings in that review deals with questions of art. These contributions to criticism are, by their nature, occasional, scattered, and unequal in value. They include the letters from abroad, reviews, notes on exhibitions and picture-sales. Any attempt to construct a theory of aesthetics from such material (though a theory is implicit) would be both unwise and unnecessary. Darley was too modest about his attainments to attempt anything of the kind. His idea of the education and qualities essential to a critic was exacting; and he would no doubt be profoundly shocked to be judged, on matters that meant most to him, by his journalism. Yet it is journalism with a difference—no mere question of mutton-chops. Hampered though he was by the conditions under which he wrote, this body of work has unity of outlook and purpose. He was writing on subjects that interested him profoundly and about which he had deep convictions to state. Few of his contemporaries had his qualifications for the task. He was writing, too, at a time when he was particularly needed, when few in England could discuss questions of art with authority, and to an audience more than usually apathetic, if not ignorant. Had he attacked the subject in a more reasoned manner, at his leisure, his name as a critic would doubtless have been well known. But he was a poet at odds with his age, and his critical work was not only scattered but anonymous. Yet there must have been many who, like H. F. Chorley, were stirred to comparison and thought by his letters from the Continent, 'pregnant with research and unborrowed speculation'. If the history of art criticism in England is ever written—it does not promise to be a brilliant book—Darley will take a place of some importance among the names of the nineteenth century.

He was well acquainted with the chief ancient and modern authorities on his subject, but his immediate starting-point was the collection of *Discourses* delivered by Sir Joshua Reynolds as a series of presidential addresses between 1769 and 1790, a book which greatly influenced his conceptions, both in theory and

example The *Discourses*, one of the capital books of eighteenth-century criticism, is worthy of the age of Johnson and Burke. In its balance, sobriety, and admirable language, as well as in its obvious limitations, it may be regarded as the fine flower of formalism in art theory. Sir Joshua was no innovator. He is plainly of his century, bringing to bear on questions of aesthetic rather an excellent common sense than a profound intellectual curiosity. In liberal fashion, aided always by his own practice of art, he interprets and resumes a long-established tradition. Nothing shows this better than his inability to stand clear of the small dogmatists Dufresnoy, de Piles, and de Caylus, his more important predecessors. He is not very different in spirit from a Joseph Spence or a Jonathan Richardson, however much he transcends them in grasp and expression, and however little he is possessed of their particular dogmas. It is understandable therefore, that Blake, from his 'eternal dwelling-place', inspiration, and vision, should scribble in the margin of the *Discourses* 'A lie! a lie! a lie!' and condemn them with bad verses.

Reynolds was ignorant both of Winckelmann's dangerous neo-classical enthusiasm and of the more fertile *Laocoon* of Lessing, which had rendered most of the eighteenth-century treatises obsolete and placed the study of aesthetics on a more firm and reasonable basis in a different atmosphere. There is, of course, a similarity between some of his dicta and certain canons of the *Laocoon*; but what was fundamentally new in Lessing—his discrimination between the long-confused laws of poetry and painting, and his criticism of the tendency to explain one art in terms of the other—was beyond the horizon of Reynolds. He neglected the few indications that might have led him to discovery—such as the ingenious reflections of the Abbé Du Bos—and his knowledge of the history of art is necessarily fragmentary. Yet, when it is remembered that his purpose was rather to teach students than to elaborate a philosophic theory of fine art, the *Discourses* will be found to advance principles having a surprising unity, and they must always attract more than the curious reader if the author's terms are sympathetically interpreted and his qualifying statements allowed for.

No one, we believe, has troubled to assess the worth of those who succeeded to portions of Sir Joshua's critical mantle. His reputation was tall enough to cast a shade over the lectures of that unfortunate artist, James Barry, an earlier B. R. Haydon,

and over those of John Opie and Henry Fuseli, for twenty years professor of painting to the Royal Academy. Fuseli's lectures are bombastic and pretentious, but he knew German, and he was the first of the English professors to name Lessing's *Laocoon*. Part of his third lecture, *Invention*, is indeed based on the new theories. Blake and his few writings on art were known only to the elect.

The next notable critic of art, William Hazlitt, was as ignorant of Winckelmann and Lessing as Sir Joshua, and for this reason his writings on the subject, which form a pleasant by-path in his work, lead us away from the main road of art criticism.¹ His equipment for the office of art critic—the technical knowledge he had acquired as painter and copyist, his enthusiasm for pictures, and his short journalistic experience—are too well known to be laboured here. He never went so far as to state a consistent theory. But he has many interesting things to say.

He found his starting-point, naturally enough, in Sir Joshua's *Discourses*, and as an antagonist. His criticism, founded on experience which included a study of the recently acquired Elgin Marbles, is mainly directed against certain narrow dogmas, re-stated in the *Discourses*, that he held to be unnatural shackles wherewith artists were burdened; and of these Reynolds's theory of the grand style and 'the ideal' is perhaps the chief. In this particular Reynolds was the mouthpiece of eighteenth-century aesthetic. When he wrote that 'the grand style in art, and the most perfect imitation of Nature, consists in avoiding the details and peculiarities of particular objects', when he talked of an ideal fixed or determinate form, and drew an absolute antithesis between the universal and the individual, then he was a legitimate object of attack for the more fresh, 'romantic' intelligence of Hazlitt. Such conceptions were anathema to a critic who held that the Elgin Marbles have 'every appearance of absolute *fac-similes* or casts taken from nature' and owe their pre-eminence to 'the immediate imitation of nature'. The core of Hazlitt's criticism can be revealed in a few sentences.

¹ The chief of Hazlitt's writings on art are Articles in the *Champion* (August to November 1814) which form the basis of the article 'Fine Arts' contributed to the *Encyclopædia Britannica* in 1824 (and afterwards republished), two articles 'On the Elgin Marbles', based on others in the *Examiner* of 1816, contributed to the *London Magazine* in February and May 1822, two essays in *Table Talk* (1821) 'On Certain Inconsistencies in Sir Joshua Reynolds's Discourses', and a series of articles on English picture galleries, printed (mainly) in the *London Magazine* between December 1822 and November 1823, and published as *Sketches of the Principal Picture-Galleries in England* by Taylor and Hessey in 1824.

'The *ideal* is not the preference of that which exists only in the mind, to that which exists in nature, but the preference of that which is fine in nature to that which is less so. There is nothing in art but what is taken almost immediately, and, as it were, in the mass, from what is finer in nature. Where there have been the finest models in nature, there have been the finest works of art.'

Or again:

'Grandeur does not consist in omitting the parts, but in connecting all the parts into a whole, and in giving their combined and varied action abstract truth or ideal perfection does not consist in rejecting the peculiarities of form, but in rejecting all those which are not consistent with the character intended to be given, and in following up the same *general idea* of softness, voluptuousness, strength, activity, or any combination of these through every ramification of the frame. But these modifications of form or expression can only be learnt from nature, and therefore the perfection of art must always be sought in nature.'

Thus 'the ideal' for Hazlitt was an existing perfection carried to its extreme, and one that must be found before it could be expressed. We hesitate to imagine what marginal comments Blake would have made on such doctrines. The degree of truth they contain is obvious, but just as obvious are the dangers of their Philistine over-statement. Moreover, they, and other doctrines like them, acutely misrepresent Reynolds, whose early theory of 'the ideal' is modified not only in his own practice, but by qualifications introduced into the later and richer 'Discourses'.

Is Hazlitt, then, a 'realist'? In one respect, perhaps, he may be held to anticipate the young Ruskin's fervid attention to exact detail. At first glance his theory and practice as art critic seem to be inconsistent. They can, however, be reconciled with difficulty. Both protest against pseudo-classical frigidity. In his criticism of individual pictures, as in his admiration of *gusto* or intensity, he is a romantic impressionist with a tendency to write of what he sees in terms of sound, touch, or smell, interpreting qualities by reference to the emotions awakened in himself. He opposes his romantic 'gusto' to the classical 'restraint'. His best writing on art comes of his ability to recreate in words an aesthetic emotion he has experienced. His qualities are literary rather than philosophic, and to contemporary work he is a poor guide.¹

After Hazlitt the first critic of art who comes readily to mind

¹ See *Hazlitt as a Critic of Art*, by S. P. Chase (Publications of the Modern Language Association of America), vol. xxxix, No. 1, March 1924.

is the young graduate of Oxford whose idolatrous championship of Turner at the expense of ancient landscape painters excited immediate attention. The period between 1825 and the publication of the first volume of *Modern Painters* in 1843 is not rich in art criticism. Ruskin's editors, indeed, make no attempt to evaluate his predecessors, so poor does the period seem. The desultory writings of B. R. Haydon are more remarkable for verve than coherence, and writers like John Burnett, whose works repay study, are rare.¹ This barrenness is relieved by Darley's important and neglected contribution.

Darley's starting-point, as we have said, was the *Discourses*, but his attitude towards that book was very different from Hazlitt's. He was acquainted with Hazlitt's writings, and with those of Winckelmann and Lessing, among other Germans, and he had studied assiduously, at home and on the Continent, to fit himself for the office of critic. Yet he did not find the counsel of Reynolds vicious and out-moded. The *Discourses* remained for him a considerable book, demanding what, as he often lamented, it never received—expert annotation. In a review of Hazlitt's *Fine Arts* article² he rushes vigorously to Reynolds's defence and a castigation of his opponent. Hazlitt is certainly a sparkling imaginative writer with a gift for paradox, but he was never meant to be a 'tutelar genius of painting'. His tract might have been dismissed with due praise of its vivid thoughts, picturesque images, and glimpses of truth, 'but that the brilliant axe it lays to the root of Art required to be turned aside'. This axe symbolizes Hazlitt's attack on Reynolds's doctrine of the ideal and Hazlitt's own definition of the same (quoted above). Darley shows by example that Hazlitt misinterpreted Reynolds and presented an erroneous view of the *Discourses*. Because English painters have misapplied the 'ideal doctrine' of Reynolds and have been misled by the great artist's imperfect practice, that is no reason, he holds, for abusing an excellent theory by crying down the ultra-ideal and crying up the ultra-natural. He can make nothing of Hazlitt's definition of the grand style. To him it means that 'every piece of work which is consistent with its character however mean and vulgar, which follows out its general idea however petty and poor—belongs to the grand style, realizes ideal perfection'. Thus 'the

¹ It is perhaps worth mentioning, as reflecting current taste, that John Smith's *A Catalogue Raisonné of the Works of the most eminent Dutch, Flemish, and French Painters*, a work still standard, was published between 1829 and 1837.

² The *Athenæum*, 28 July (in particular) 1838.

Drunken Faun becomes as grand as the Phidian *Dioscuros* of Monte Cavallo, and Alderman Carbuncle's image in the glass is nearer ideal perfection than Sir Joshua's *Lord Heathfield* . . .¹ Than which nothing, he thinks, could be more absurd

He attributes the present low ebb of English art to the new and unintelligent middle-class patronage and to the neglected education of artists as a class. Yet the great painter—he instances Van Eyck and Memling—is always capable of rising superior to his surroundings. What English art most needs is attention to design. Neglect of this is Sir Joshua's great defect, both in theory and practice. But, 'let English painters be assured they cannot find anywhere, in the same compass, a solider "globe of precepts" on their art, than Reynolds's treatise, nor an emptier bubble than Hazlitt's, but they must study the former, and understand it, and imbue their practice with its genuine spirit. . . Some few higher principles than appear in the "Discourses" may be revealed elsewhere, none lower can ever be canonical.'

These higher principles were to be found in Germany, where art was fortunately indebted to a Lessing, a Goethe, and a Tieck. Such men, Darley held, were essential to the future of art. It was not enough that this future should be committed 'to the hands of *any* critics, or connoisseurs, or professors, who are such and nothing more: it must engage the interests of our loftiest poets and philosophers ere it can become illustrious'. What he has to say on Lessing is therefore of interest.¹

Why, he asks with bitter scorn, should our painters read a treatise in which 'the purest, loftiest principles of art are sought out and set forth'? Lessing is a critic with taste, knowledge, and penetration, taking the highest grounds of criticism (loftier than those of Reynolds and Lanzi), writing in a perspicuous style not burdened with the flowers of rhetoric affected by Hazlitt or Fuseli. As one to whom the pseudo-classic is of all styles the most hateful he quotes the principal canons of the *Laocoon* with approval, adding, along with the general proviso that none must be over-rigidly observed, certain particular criticisms. That 'the primary law of the Fine Arts consists in Beauty', he finds not antagonistic to the Simplicity and Tranquillity of Winckelmann, and the Truth and Expression of other writers, for Beauty comprehends these.

'Beauty contains all that is good of these four attributes, Simplicity, Tranquillity, Truth, Expression,—rejecting all that is not so, as when

¹ A review of W. Ross's translation of the *Laocoon*, *Athenæum*, 8 October 1836.

the simple becomes insipid, the tranquil formal, the true vulgar or disgusting, the expressive hideous—while it comprises, also, a great deal more, complexity, for example, short of confusion, the ornamental short of the meretricious, the gorgeous short of the gaudy, the sublime itself, for the sublime is only excellent as far as it is beautiful¹

He remarks that Lessing's strictures on descriptive poetry must especially be interpreted with latitude since Lessing is too much of a puritan in his poetical tenets. Movement, he urges, may be either corporeal or mental, emotion or motion. He cautions the reader against what he is pleased to call an oversight of Lessing—the dictum that 'pleasure' is the sole end of art.

This, perhaps, is sufficient indication of Darley's genealogy as art critic. It will be difficult, in a few pages, to convey a just idea of his theory and practice. He will both gain and lose in the process. Wherever possible he shall speak for himself; and since his criticism is rather a succession of side-lights than an ordered whole, it may, perhaps, be not inadequately represented by extract. Broadly speaking, the qualities that he desires in art are spiritual, not realistic. By revealing the virtues of the older masters to his countrymen he wishes to startle a Philistine generation out of a stubbornly complacent regard for such realistic painters as Teniers and Gerard Dou; not that he despises the art of these, but because he finds loftier qualities in neglected works. The vogue of an Annibale Carracci or a Caravaggio offends him. He believes in a hierarchy of painters, even in a hierarchy of subjects. It was his distinction to rediscover, before Ruskin and the Pre-Raphaelites, the painters of the early Italian schools. Cimabue, Orcagna, Gentile da Fabriano, Fra Giovanni Angelico, and the later Francesco Francia were among those whom he zealously appreciated. 'There is not, we believe,' he says, 'a single specimen of Frate Angelico's painting in the British Empire, filled with "Dead-game" and other Dutch pictures to its roofs.' He also wrote with enthusiasm of Jan van Eyck and Memling.¹

¹ These were critical years for the National Gallery (founded in 1824), and Darley did all he could to make it representative by zealously advocating the purchase of suitable pictures when they appeared in the sale-rooms. Not a few works of the first importance owe their presence there to his plain speaking. Many were allowed to escape, to his grief, but some of these were bequeathed to the nation later. In humbler ways, also, Darley acted as public watchdog and did great service. As a step to the improvement of public taste he made a strong plea for sensible catalogues and handbooks of all public collections and buildings. The British Museum catalogue is 'an inventory, for the most part, as dry as an auctioneer's', and why, he protests, should the Soane Museum

Nothing gives a better idea of Darley's general attitude and his view of the difficulties he had to contend with, than his obituary notice of Mr William Seguer, the 'superintendent of all the royal and national picture collections', who died in 1843. The document is the pungently honest summary of a period.

Mr. William Seguer

'We record the death of this well-known public officer . . . less on its own account, though it deserves mention, than because it allows us to express certain opinions regarding the superintendence of national establishments—opinions that we have long held, from profound conviction of their truth, but also withheld from delicacy towards an amiable and most respectable man. Our acquaintanceship with Mr Seguer was in matters of *connoissance* alone, and would enable us to furnish few details of his private life and character, were they even relevant or important. He once informed us, as we recollect, of his having been "taught" by the celebrated William Blake—how different the master and the pupil! how different their lot! Blake earned eighteen shillings a week and immortal renown, while his scholar earned the directorship of almost all the great picture galleries—and such slight memorials as this! But if he did not imbibe any of that fanciful painter's sublime and singular genius, Nature had bestowed upon him a far more profitable gift—common sense—which he best evinced, perhaps, by resigning an art that promised him neither fame nor fortune, and undertaking a lowlier one, that ensured the latter. Instead of an artist, he became a pictorial artizan, called a picture-cleaner, and by his diligence, his adroitness, and discretion, did, we believe, as much service in the reparation of ancient master-pieces as any other adept, and rather less than the customary damage—no small praise. Extended and observant practice of this kind matured his judgment, and made him, before long, a wary connoisseur—a leading critic—and, at length, an oracle. To his successful career, no doubt, conduced his extreme urbanity, good humour, kindness, and communicativeness upon the subject of art. Although an uneducated man (we might use a stronger adjective), and speaking, as some persons not illiterate do, the vernacular *patois*, with all its characteristic redundancy and deficiency and vicarious interchange of letters, Mr Seguer frequented the highest circles, where his natural good breeding received

be closed for nine months in the year, the Print Room of the British Museum for one month, and the National Gallery for the six weeks' yearly vacation? Why should there be such extortionate charges for viewing St Paul's? His reviews of books on art, at that day mostly incompetent and pretentious, were also to the public good. His criticism is disinterested and enlightened. 'Unless the very best original works of art throughout Europe have been visited and studied,' he writes, 'it were as impossible to become a good critic, as a good comparative anatomist from having killed your own meat. comparison is the ground of all true criticism.'

a polish that, despite the said drawbacks, carried him well through conversations not over-refined. We particularize these little items, because they afford an irrefragable test of the state in which artistic criticism stood under the last two reigns—how any one who possessed no intellectual endowments or acquirements—no very purified, or exalted, or expanded tastes—who had no pretensions beyond those of a skilful picture-mender, should have obtained the sovereign chair of connoisseurship, above all his coevals, can be accounted for only by the despicable nature of the “aesthetics” then prevalent. George the Fourth was, at best, a dignified *petit-maitre*, ostentatiously elegant, and essentially vulgar-minded: to him we owe Buckingham Palace, Regent Street, and Brighton Pagoda—each a gigantic display of littleness, through him and his patronage, *Nash*, from a confectioner of lath-and-plaster houses, became a popular architect—*Laurence*, from an exquisite limner a limner of exquisites—*Seguer*, from a picture cleaner, superintendent of all the royal and national picture collections together! We do hope, that if these numerous pinacothecas must have, like the separate wings of Millbank Penitentiary, but one overseer, this lay-pluralist will be sought in a more elevated class of *savans* than picture-cleaners,—let him be a gentleman, either artist or amateur, not unacquainted with ancient and middle-age and modern literature, familiar with the whole department of Criticism, theoretical as well as practical, possessing enlightened taste, and a comprehensive esteem for *all* the Arts, and all the Schools, and all the Masters, in their distinct yet connected and convergent lines. We may have here sketched out a “Grandison” director—

A faultless monster which the world ne’er saw.

‘Yet we could *point out* a close approximation to our model—on the Continent: The very low standard, likewise, taken hitherto by our countrymen makes them, we suspect, imagine the qualities above-mentioned not so much incompatible as superfluous. The late Director’s knowledge of art suited their ignorance, it was chiefly, or altogether, anecdotal and traditional, he could cite a pleasant tale about Claude when a pastry cook, or tell what Cromwell said about his warts to the portraitist, or all the Emperor of Austria remarked about Sir Thomas’s “Pope Pius”; he could descant upon the grace of Raffael, and the airs of Guido, etc., etc; but a deeper vein of criticism is, we trust, now in demand. The Catalogue he drew up for the National Gallery would vindicate more than we have said against his limited attainments; it swarmed at first with errors, and is still over-run with them. Of the Spanish School he knew as much as any cognoscente among us—quasi nothing, of the German little more; of the Italian far from enough; of

* Mr C. L. Eastlake succeeded Seguer at the National Gallery, and Sir Augustus Calcott was made Keeper of the Queen’s Pictures. Darley welcomed Eastlake’s appointment as a step towards the light. Darley’s reference above is perhaps to Waagen of Berlin or Frenzel of Dresden.

the French perhaps a good deal (though his mistake between *Lancret* and *Watteau* renders us sceptical), but of the Dutch and Flemish schools we believe him to have been an excellent judge, and no ill one of the English. About Sculpture we should guess he understood a *minumum*, about Architecture nought whatever, about Engraving much, especially of the particular schools. Upon the whole, as a connoisseur, if he was not in advance of his own era, he was fully abreast of it, and let this merit enjoy its due praise, when so many a presumptuous man lags behind the present age while he thinks to lead it'

Darley maintained that the English people deserved their Seguer as they deserved the trashy books imposed upon them, because of their ignorance and apathy. He was bitterly indignant at the utilitarian tendencies of his day. It was, to him, an age of criticism, not of original literature; an age not of Gold, Silver, Brass or Iron, but Tinsel. One of the chief causes of this specious glitter he held to be the substitution of middle-class for upper-class patronage, a change that was bound to come, but one accompanied by certain, perhaps transient, evils. Middle-class taste admired crudity and colour, and from its patronage resulted trivialities and 'low' subjects. Yet bad taste was better than no taste at all: it might be improved. That, however, was slow work. How rarely was it possible, in times so unambitious of true excellence, to praise honestly and from the heart

'Almost all we are obliged to read, or see, or hear, or handle, all the present productions mental or manual of British toil have a Brummagem stamp about them—books, pictures, statues, edifices, no less than cast-iron ware and cutlery—almost all articles from minikin pins up to new parish churches, from encyclopædias down to children's alphabets, are Brummagem, essentially Brummagem,—undertaken by contract, executed per order, put forth in the gross, and paid for in the lump, showy and perishable, promising to do more than they need, accomplishing little that they ought, satisfied with the minimum of merit which shall ensure them a market. . . ' (1841.)

That is but one of many indictments. If such are the productions of his countrymen even more contemptible is their spirit. Here is a violent diatribe against the Philistines of England and their humbug, that Arnold was later to repeat in a more quietly convincing manner.

'England is one broad mountebank stage in the middle of some million wisecracs. From the orator who puffs off his party spirit for patriotism, or his carrion pies for mutton pastry, from the scribbler who stuffs out with fustian panegyric some pigmy novelist as a *Magnus Apollo*, or the

painter who bedaubs his canvas like the cheek of a demirep, and makes his picture a salad of anemones and butterfly-wings to please the sensual taste of a luxurious people; from the vender of cotton-fuzz stockings, home-brewed port, or best beaver hats of weasel and fox hair, from these and their like, who form one moiety of the nation, to the other which still conceits *that* the worstest set of proceeders in the world, and itself the wisest, all is deception.' (1837) .

Is it any wonder that the enthusiasms of this people, when they have enthusiasms, are wrong-headed and ridiculous?

'We have known persons who fell straight into the finest fits of ecstasy at seeing Herr Von Helldunkel's "Last Judgment", yet stood as cool as if they had been cut out of cucumber before Michaelangelo's! Some will rhapsodize the length of an *Iliad* about Mr Such-a-one's "Addisonian style", yet detest Addison and all his works! or will dilate upon the "Miltomic beauties" in Mr Prettyman's last new poem, yet feel none of these in *Paradise Lost*! Others will look daggers, poisoned daggers, if you question the sublime eloquence of the Rev. Mr Cantwell's extempore prayer, while they drowse over the noblest Psalm with no more perception than a parish-clerk has that it contains aught beyond good Sunday reading! How many people (literary people) will eulogize a popular novelist as they should a Shakspeare only, and Shakspeare as they should only a popular novelist! Delightful in truth to behold the radiant benevolence of those who hunt out shoemaker poets, and cherish aspiring stone-masons into sculptors—not because their *protégés* were obscure men of genius, but men of obscure genius,—not because they were real poets and sculptors who wanted patronage to show themselves such, but shoemakers and stone-masons whom patronage wanted to show *itself* such! . .' (1843)

Such were the people who must be shocked, Darley felt, out of their complacent insularity. Every generation, it may be urged with truth, has its Jeremiah. Every generation, likewise, needs him. Darley was something more than a disappointed poet, and those censures are more than red-hot phrases. They are not, of course, all the picture, or all Darley's picture, of contemporary England. But there were many evils to remedy in an age that had ignored Keats and Shelley and preferred Laetitia Landon and Felicia Hemans to Tennyson and Browning. Darley's indignation was particularly directed against an ever-present materialism that was to him the negation of all spiritual values.

' . . . What is to convert us, it were hard to prophesy, from this preposterous creed that pampering the carnal part of our nature is the one reasonable occupation, and that abstract joys cannot be utilitarian,

though our better part, the soul, can taste and feed upon and benefit by no other! Suppose the end-all *were* death; are we body and spirit, yet will purvey for the former alone? But if death be no more than a shaking off the dust from that stamen of existence, the immortal spirit,—shall we have so much care about the comforts of this dust which lets them merely filter through it a few years, while we give ourselves as little concern as religious profession will permit, about what would enlarge and exalt itself by every gift, carrying each with it at least to the tomb, even though it dropped the freight there, and did not reproduce it in another world?" (1838)

It was natural that Darley, feeling so strongly the materialistic tendencies of his generation in art and literature, should endeavour almost with passion to confront it with principles more securely based. Most writers of the day, he held, proceeded upon principles too narrow, or on none whatever. He appealed for a sound transcendentalism—not, he says, the misty doctrines of the Germans who took a dip into profundity only to emerge with all its darkness about them, but a transcendentalism recognizing that art has claim 'to admiration but as handsome temple or house furniture, except so far as its attributes partake of the incorporeal and immortal, of philosophic principle and poetic spirit'. For the glory of art begins where its mechanism ends. It is perhaps needless to say that no mere question of morality vexed Darley.¹ He was, too, the sworn foe of all pious imitation such as that practised by the German 'Nazarenes'. Some at least of the dangers of his doctrine he recognized, but he saw no reason why critics should be seduced by either the spiritual or the practical extreme.

"Transcendental views are merely those taken from pinnacles instead of flats, at all the shining eminences within a panorama, instead of the little objects and obscurities within a limited landscape: nor are the loftiest summits to which genuine transcendentalism mounts, though above common sight, more *en l'air* than the peaks of Chimborazo or Chandrasichara are flying islands. Very true, clouds often gather on the mountain tops—but do mists never thicken on the plain? do not fogs love the lowest ground? Nay, do not all three, fogs, mists, and clouds, rise from the *sea-level* perpetually, while they rest on the pinnacles only by accident? We admit contemplative occupations liable to abuse: are worldly liable to none? If those sometimes take our wits a flight to the moon, do these never stoop them in the sludge of earth? Is the one

¹ Nor was his 'spiritual' bias narrowed, as was that of the early Ruskin, by Evangelical Christianity

extreme, an erratic mind, worse than the other, a grovelling, or is he more a madman who would feed his bodily person upon ether than he who would batten his immortal spirit upon ox-beef? There may be a sound as well as an unsound transcendentalism—an *English* as well as a *German*. Icarus who soared too high fell into the sea, but Dedalus, who imagined and wrought the wings, because he kept the middle air between earth and heaven, flew over.' (1835)

Elsewhere Darley becomes more particular, and shows us his theories put into practice. Their dangers are then at once manifest.

'In supreme Art the merits must be *poetical* and *ethical*—must be those of sentiment, imagination, feeling, exhibition of the passions and emotions, above everything that effluence of inborn grace diffused over beautiful forms which purifies the observer's soul, that sublimity which exalts it otherwise, Art can engage but the attention of superficialists and the disdain of all profound minds. I would submit as a general rule for examining a picture, to look for the latter merits, if not first (as colour and effect come out to meet us),—principally, and to be determined, where they are present, by them chiefly Power to *find* them, and to give them their due preference, each amongst the others, and all of them over mechanical merits, though less a matter of rule than of taste, intuitive, acquired, or both (which is the only taste perfect),—springs not a little from a right prepossession in their favour Let us cast our eyes on two oblong paintings here by Ercole Grandi, an old Ferrarese artist—*Christ Betrayed* and *Going to Crucifixion*,—we revolt at their jejune treatment, or smile at it with affable forgiveness but look into the pictures, look deeply into them as the meditative painter himself did—and he has your heart in a net! We who pitied his weakling efforts, feel the potent magician draw us within his sway, by those strongest of all ties, our affections, he has laid the mighty hold of sympathy upon us, and, wrestle as we will, we come like children all love and reverence, and begging pardon for our stubbornness, to his feet at last. This is the secret, if you will know it, of that fascination which these antique painters exert over their admirers; their imperfections are merely technical, their perfections spiritual, moral, intellectual, often artistic too, wherefore the balance preponderates to their side, except with those judges who maintain the lesser qualities preferable to the greater.' (1838.)

'Their imperfections are merely technical, their perfections spiritual, moral, intellectual, often artistic too' There is the rub. These are principles that seem likely to entrap their advocate in quicksands. But his remarks, be it noted, are addressed not to artists, but to critics and the general public. Later he broadens (or makes more narrow, according to the taste of the reader) his

theories to include all the arts, and carries them to a logical though highly contentious conclusion. He holds that the education of public taste lies, as it has always lain, with a body of apostles whom he calls 'amateurs', the 'Athenian people in the Republic of Art'. To them also must genius look for judicious and honest encouragement. They are neither artists (who are too concerned with technique to make unbiased critics) nor dilettanti (for these have manias, and the fiercest ravings always concern minor artists and minor merits), but men of a liberal education and perfected taste. Their purpose is not only to improve the artistic sense. Their mission is to forward the noblest aims of civilization by enlarging and illuminating the 'rational soul' of a people in combating materialism and a narrow taste.

'Art has been hitherto studied for the sake of Art. A very different fate we prophesy attends it hereafter. Practitioners will, of course, and should, continue so to cultivate it till the last day. But the grand object of aesthetical science, the Catholic, the philosophic object, is not to make us judges of pictures and statues, not to improve sculpture back again towards Greek perfection, nor painting beyond Middle-Age excellence. It is to augment the means and enlarge the sphere of Civilization. Beautiful forms, colours, mechanism, all enchant the mind through the senses to what is brute in man, the voluptuous, the lascivious, the garish, are the beautiful. therefore by a due admixture of both the purer and impurer beautiful, Art exercises its dominion over him, and through the very lusts of his flesh at length refines, ennobles, exalts his spiritual nature. Under this view, however, Art itself sinks into a mere ancillary condition, into an aid towards the great end—Civilization. And as such it will, ere long, be considered. that, we think, will be its future office. it attained its specific end, its own perfection, centuries ago, a less ambitious, though not less honourable and useful, career is still before it.' (1846)

Later in the same paper he emphasizes, rhetorically, the transcendentalism that he calls rational, and journeys into a misty region.

'Criticism should rate *Art itself* according to its loftier qualities, not its lower. *These* are its qualities purely artistic; *those* its qualities poetic and philosophic, its qualities catholic and cosmopolite, its qualities which embrace under a certain view the whole progress of man's mind, past and future, which illustrate his character and condition by its contemporaneous monuments, which tend most to his further mental and moral amelioration, which, in brief, have an ubiquitous bearing upon the deep interests of Humanity far more important than the ill or well-fare of his

finest handicraft, the perfection or imperfection of its perishable specimens painted, sculptured and piled. Seldom has this, we apprehend, been considered. Seldom do our critics distinguish the primary and secondary qualities of Art,—seldom still graduate each among themselves, giving art likewise her true position.

And this neglect of degree it is
That by a pace goes backward, with a purpose
It hath to climb¹

'Aesthetics will never climb without the steps we have mentioned. Those super-eminent qualities are the terraced heights leading to the table-land whence a vast and varied survey of Art's many-branched outflows may be taken,—how her chief streams, like the four rivers of Paradise, permeate the boundless world of mind, and mingle with all the other floods that refresh, enrich, or render it lovelier. There let Amateurs fix their aesthetical observatory,—not upon the little Acropolis of Art-practice, to get the mere view of a province, even though a Parthenon crown it, and temples, statues, and pictured porticoes bestrew it as thick as brilliants did the Valley of Diamonds. Let us descend by times, if we will, to observe the said glittering eminence closer, to inspect its more secret beauties, to learn its minutest details when they furnish data for general conclusions; but let us re-ascend to etherealize the spirit of this particular Art-knowledge amidst the purer regions of contemplation above; let us reascend, if merely to see how small a portion of this knoll we have just visited makes of its mother Alp—*ars æcumenica*—the accumulated mass of artistic principles which anywise contribute towards exalting and ennobling man's nature through his tastes for visible images of the Beautiful, or what may be deemed so. That were a transcendentalism in aesthetics most rational, most utilitarian, such as would reconcile to it even those who think the term now but a magnificent polysyllable, synonymous with madness. The folly is, to think it always so.' (1846)

Despite their brave show of completeness these statements are disturbing and, in the main, heretical. The critic of art has strayed beyond his sphere in attempting to embrace all the issues, pertinent and extraneous. He assumes that form and content are divisible, and reduces art herself from sovereignty to a pitiable dependency. If we grant him his perfect interpreter (philosopher-poet-artist) there remains this elaborate system of measurement, classification and comparison according to certain fixed principles that treat all the arts as dead rather than living things. The essential qualities of the individual artist or poet tend to escape. What is to become of an old Crome or a Herrick in such a hierarchy? How is the 'new' artist to be recognized and valued?

¹ *Troilus and Cressida*, Act I, Scene iii

The will-o'-the-wisp that Darley pursued was that which has lured on many a greater critic, the wish for completeness and certainty, the desire to establish permanent qualities of taste where there can be no permanence, to frame fixed laws where all is gradual flux. The *race-milieu-moment* theories of Taine, the evolutionary doctrines of Brunetière, the 'high seriousness' of Arnold are reasoned attempts to meet the same need. With Darley, as we have said, it is more a question of outlook than of system. His theories colour his criticism but he does not rigorously apply them. They are of considerable historical interest and most valuable as a stimulant and corrective to his contemporaries, yet he must be judged rather by his performance in criticism than by them. He had the root of the matter in him, and perhaps, when that is so, one sincere approach to a great subject is as good as another. The arts mattered enormously to him, much more than Civilization. Thus our interest centres in the record of his spiritual adventures in the presence of creative work. The quality of that record, reflecting the quality of his personality, is the main question.

Since his criticism is comparatively inaccessible this quality can be only suggested. For Raphael, Correggio, and Titian, as the 'three principal supports of the Temple of Painting', he substitutes, on a wider basis of consideration, Leonardo, Michaelangelo, Raphael. Leonardo is, to him, the foundation and fountain-head of all excellence in modern painting, and reviewing with scorn a life of the painter scarce important enough to be the memorial of an illustrious drawing-master, he writes:

'But this most extraordinary man deserves a Life in letters of burning gold. Leonardo's mind was, perhaps, one of the divinest that universal intelligence ever detached from itself. Vastitude and variety were its characteristics. True, they were exhibited more in purpose than in act; for the spirit, imprisoned within the body, was almost strangled there by working in chains, by its own violent efforts to break through them. Nevertheless, enough remains, though scattered, to demonstrate its faculties of material creation no less than theoretic. Very often a single work (such as the *Monna Lisa*) contains, like the small bright portion cut by a micrometer on the convexity of the sun, a whole world, broadening, as it were, beneath that little surface. Were the powers concentrated in this one figure, expanded to their full detail, the items would amaze, by their number, not a few who forget how many qualifications are requisite, in a mortal, to work a miracle. Leonardo had the true Catholicism of supreme genius. We know of none, at least in modern

times, that approached closer to what we may call, by an intelligible solecism, the finite omnipotence of Shakespeare. He was not only the poet, but (as so technically distinguished) the philosopher, the contemplative, the practical genius, the fathomer of the human heart and the familiar of nature. Comparing him with his antagonist and contemporary, we might say that Buonarrotti soared to greater altitudes, while Leonardo took more spacious wing. Michael was an eagle, perpetually hovering over his own solitudes, however near he approached the sun, Leonardo might be likened to that fabulous bird, whose restless eyry is the circumambient sky' (1836)

No artist excels Leonardo 'in painting the soul upon the face under its various modifications'. Raphael's is the sameness of outward beauty, Leonardo's of inward; and the 'elder heads' of Raphael cannot compare with those of Leonardo's *Cena* in point of mental development. Before the *Monna Lisa*, 'this Cynosure of portraits', Darley is all adoration. He uses the work of Leonardo and Michaelangelo, and their pursuit of perfection, to refute the suggestion that elaboration is inconsistent with genius, and to read a lesson to contemporary artists. 'Genius, forsooth, must not so much bring forth as farrow. Thus doth it now-a-days; and, lo!—what a litter!' No doubt genius has its best thoughts intuitively, but to use these thoughts is matter for delay and intellectual toil. 'Genius, we admit, contracts labour, does its work in prodigious moments that have hours of common time within them; still, it is under the curse, and by the sweat of the brow must the fruits of the brain be reared to perfection. . . . Poetry is not to be whistled like a bird's song.' Leonardo spent four years on the *Monna Lisa*, and left it unfinished, yet as soon as an English student can stick two hands under a boddice, and a head above it, he sets up for a painter of portraits.

Of Michaelangelo, 'the greatest of modern draughtsmen', Darley says little that is particular, but he writes from Rome that a cast is being taken from the *Moses* for France, though fashion prefers replicas of Canova's 'cockney fadaiseries'.

'Truth to say, the Moses is like an Alp, which, as somebody remarks, must be looked at several times before one perceives its full mightiness. It has literally grown upon me since I first saw't, till it now makes a mouse of me by its tremendous sublimity. What do I care if it be goat faced?—it shakes me to the centre, whether as a Pan or a Moses. Its mere manipulation so mighty handed! Compare it with the figures beside, designed by Michael, but wrought by his pupil Montorsoli. They are as feeble as if carved out of suet. Every stroke of Buonarrotti's chisel

has the energetic ease of that made in the brown fallow by a plough-share.' (1834)

To this may be added another early judgement on what he had seen in Italy, written evidently by a student of the *Discourses* who is observing with his own eyes:

'Now these Domenichinos, I assure you, give me a vast deal more trouble [than the doings of the Pope and the Carbonari]. Will you believe it? Domenichino is positively little better than the dull good man his contemporaries pronounced him. A few strawberry specimens shown about Europe, and his "St Jerome", not stolen, but openly plundered from Agostino Carracci, have gained him a name which the trash at bottom belies. You think, from the engraving, his "Sibylla Persica" a monstrous elegant creature. I never saw a coarser hussy painted for Sultana Fatima, at a barn-house play. Then these Carracci with their inimitable Farnese frescos. I went to the Farnese as I would to a second Sistine. if you had seen the pickle my face was in coming out! Like a patient's in the last stage of mortification. Even the "Stanze" of Raffael, what with the defilement committed there by Time and Carlo Maratti, the Penni and Pippi and proxy look of several among them, together with, perhaps, an original want of mighty-handedness about the author himself. I should be amazed, indeed, if Reynolds ever passed through them without recognising his divine spirit, but still more, if he had imagined it blazing there in all its glory. I am persuaded, that Raffael's fame and favour with us, after all, does not rest (contrary, I fear, to general opinion) on his fresco paintings. Graceful and elegant as these may be, full of good design and composition, there is a defect of *power* about them, which makes them secondary to those works of his, where such an attribute is not so essential. Perhaps, his "Galatea" at the Farnesina, and his little panels at the Loggia, might form exceptions, but exceptions that rather prove the general case, inasmuch as the size and subject of these frescos made power, as we call it *par excellence*, no requisite. In oils there was a sweetness, a purity, a source of refinement and perpetual amelioration more congenial to the mild, pains-taking, beauty-given spirit of this painter, than in the extempore and stubborn nature of fresco. Those ineffably gracious Madonnas and Holy Families—those portraits so full of deep metaphysical expression and character—those historical pictures replete with the noble, the charming, the sweetly sublime—those Cartoons, by good chance, perhaps, never painted nor transferred from the canvas—such are, to my mind, the works upon which Raffael's highest claim to immortality rests, though his fresco may be higher ground to rest it on. His very Sibyls at the Pace, and Isaiah at St Agostino, which Lanzi asserts to "have all that Michael Angelo's want", (forgetting that Michael's too may have all that *they* want—as is precisely the fact—power,) these would lamentably disappoint the tourist

who relied upon the common text—that Raffael's forte is in fresco. After all, of the great masters, Michael Angelo and Paul Veronese alone fully sustain their ultramontane characters when you approach them in Italy. You expect more from Titian than even his chefs-d'œuvre at Venice fulfil, from Parmegiano, Giorgione, Tintoretto, etc., much, much more from the Carracci and their school, including Guido himself. Correggio may be said, indeed, to better his ground, for no one can have an adequate idea of this master, without seeing his frescos at Parma. Compared with them, his very best easel-pictures are little-girlish, affected, and un-ideal. Fresco painting brought out the full breadth and grandeur of his soul. No St Catherine kissing petitoes with the side of her cheek, no dainty fingered Madonnas handling baby-linen, with the goût of Hogarth's Jean Maigne savouring roast beef, no elaborate pasting and kneading of colours till the canvas looks like a dough cake, no importunity of chiaroscuro, but a stupendous generality and might of manner, the very widest play of hand, a rapid and contemptuous prostration of the greatest difficulties before him, and a spaciousness of light and shade reminding one of that thrown by the clouds themselves, and the sunshine, upon the face of nature. Verily, I am scarce exaggerating, though you know of old I love to give full outburst to my admiration as well as to my aversion. You could, I say, hardly contract your pupils to the "St Jerome" itself, after contemplating those enormous shells of sunlight at the Duomo, or those magnificent panels at St Paul's, though none of them be a yard square, and the subjects of almost all, nothing but angelic chubbs, and cupids, and bare boys turning their rotundities to you and each other. *Manner* is the huge thing here; and, perhaps, in Michael himself, it is seldom more overpowering. Between the sticks of Correggio's oil and fresco brush, there seems to have been about the same difference, as between the spindle and the club of Hercules. By the first, you are only put in mind of the woman, you are beaten down by the latter with its mere sweeping and whirling above and about you. . . the light from one of those shells is a sunstroke, it blinds you for the moment, and makes you a little foolish ever after' (1834)

Darley's account of the Correggios in the Dresden Gallery is much too long for quotation.¹ Correggio, he thinks, cannot long keep his present ground, except as a 'mighty chiaroscurist and a manipulative painter'. He criticizes the pagan spirit in which the artist handles Christian subjects. The *St. George* is used to illustrate the dangers of Correggio's chief quality—grace. Here

¹ *Athenæum*, 1 December 1838. Darley laments at some length the condition of these pictures and the Sistine *Madonna*, and describes them as scoured and defaced, in varying degrees, by picture-quacks. One of these, a certain Palmaroli, he holds up to immortal detestation.

it has degenerated into posturing: 'Michaelangelo often distorts the waving line to obtain grandeur, Correggio breaks it on the wheel to obtain elegance.' To this picture, and to the *St. Sebastian*, with its effect 'at once crowded and scattered', he prefers the early, simple *St. Francis*. The *Magdalene* (which he accepted as genuine), though in expression too much a pensive Eve, he extols as a miracle of loveliness, and of the *Notte* (an *Adoration of the Shepherds*) he has much to say

'In colour it falls short of Titian's lustrous glow, and Paul Veronese's cool gorgeousness, but far exceeds the work of these, as well as all other artists, in that exquisite character of tone peculiar to Correggio which unites purity, sweetness, and delicate beauty, with depth, force, fulness, and mellowness. As a piece of clair-obscur, it has neither the loaded lights of Rembrandt, nor the violent contrasts of Caravaggio, yet produces an effect by natural and gradual irradiation from a centre, which would put out their bonfire illuminations if placed beside it, and exhibits a skill to which theirs is no more than a vulgar, unvarying *knack*.'

But, though Correggio composes lights and shadows with great adroitness, he lets the contours fall together at haphazard, 'seemingly unconcerned whether the dominant lines run at all angles. . . . Here, for example, legs, arms, sticks, posts, pillars, objects of every form, straight, circular and crooked, jostle and cross each other—I mean their directions—perplexedly and unpleasantly.' As for the *Madonna di San Sisto*, once perhaps 'the noblest easel-picture in the world', despite Palmaroli its internal divinity remains. Here Darley finds his ideal Madonna, who for all her majesty, beauty, and grace is still the Carpenter's wife. He contrasts her with Buonarroti's 'mother of a hundred gods', Leonardo's smiling ladies, Correggio's smug Parmesan house-wife, and Murillo's gipsies.

For the older masters Darley had, as we have seen, a particular affection. He would rather possess Cimabue's semi-Byzantine *Virgin and Four Prophets*, in all their antiquated sublimity (a picture, he says, that seems to rise upon the wall, as you let its grandeur more and more absorb you), than 'Carlo Maratti's very best painted Lady Betty Modish of a Madonna, surrounded by the pink of his Apostles'. When, at the Calcott sale, there was an opportunity for the National Gallery to buy a fragment of a fresco by Filippino Lippi (then unrepresented), he was incensed at 'Mr. Eastlake's inexplicable conduct' in allowing it to pass to a dealer. 'A fresco much more grand never decorated Italian wall

from Cimabue to Signorelli. It is entitled "An Angel praying", we would rather describe it, adoring.'¹ One of his enthusiasms was that for Francesco Francia. In a little *Adoration of the Magi* by that artist, at Dresden, he finds exalted and purified conception, feeling, sweetness of colour, and admirable design—the merits he values most—acting as beautiful foils to each other, like various jewels set in a crown 'A great mind if it cannot spread length-wise, will spread *depth-wise*,' he remarks. It was natural that he should be delighted when the National Gallery acquired, as he had advocated, its first two Francias.² He then attempts to find the secret of the painter's distinctive style and peculiar charm:

'His *expression* is founded on the favourite Greek principle—quiet, subdued pathos under the pressure of severest agony. No one who has not experienced it can conceive the magical power, the fascinating influence of this charm. Even when the heart is on the rack, by this principle the outward form should never seem so; the features, even when most impassioned, should acquire a temperance that may give them smoothness,—for our great poet, like the Italian painter, caught the same principle, not at all from the Greeks, but from the Greekish spirit more or less incidental to every supreme genius. However, a high principle is always adopted with danger—simplicity verges towards insipidity, and Francia, as well as the Greek sculptor, when he means to represent perfect quietude of expression, sometimes falls into want of animation. This cannot be said of the works here noticed: there is nothing purer in ancient sculpture than the heads of the enthroned Madonna and of St. Lawrence, yet they are most deeply expressive. They make us tremble and thrill at the core by their very calmness. It was a like elevated feeling or instinct which taught Francia to represent those Angels who attend the Dead Christ as serene beyond mortal deportment, they are superior to all human passions, and cannot bewep what they must know is senseless clay whose departed spirit is living in perfect beatitude. Let us remark, however, the extreme tenderness with which one of them supports that sacred head, letting its hair stream transparently over her hand. She almost smiles at the poor triumph of Death, who has conquered but dust. Her companion is a model of graceful worship, reverential towards the relics, dust as they are, which lie congealed before her. A certain stiffness and hardness belonging to antique art, and visible in these pictures, rather assists their general effect: it enhances their profound quietude, and gives the frigid heaviness of death better than marble itself. What a sweet yet awful beauty characterizes

¹ National Gallery Catalogue (1921), No. 927, *An Angel Adoring*. Wynn Ellis Bequest, 1876.

² *Ibid.*, Nos. 179 and 180. Purchased in 1841.

the face of the Crucified, its mild traits as if still impressed with the resignation of his last moments to the Divine Will! How far beneath this is Correggio's "Ecce Homo", who frowns under the sharpness of his thorny chaplet, holds up his hands like a maimed mendicant for compassion, and looks as if he were going to cry!

That does not impress as more than a successful attempt at personal appreciation. It smacks too much of German theories rigorously applied.

Space forbids quotation from Darley's judgements on Titian ('Odd enough, that Titian who gave his men the air of senators, should almost always give his women the look of courtizans'), Andrea Mantegna, Paul Veronese, and Guido Reni, to choose four painters at random on whom he has interesting things to say, but before turning to modern art place must be found for two characteristic criticisms. The first is of a landscape by Cuyp, 'who loved the sunny air like a lark, and the sunny earth like a lizard, and the sunny water like a goldfish, he seems to dissolve his colours in gold, and to paint the three elements as if all saturated with that lustrous metal'.

'... A most vision-like scene, glorious enough to pass away as a dream, but fixed by the living photograph ere it fled from his own enraptured gaze! Yet not a single tint, not a trait, bears false witness against Nature, nor misrepresents her essential attributes. How then is it idealized? Selection and combination of her beauties, omission and reduction of her defective accidents, produce much of the said result in this, and do so more or less in every fine work, still Cuyp has a mode of idealizing we think very peculiar to him, and perhaps seldom observed. He gives his substances a slight degree of *immateriality* that somewhat diminishes their earthliness, and thus bestows upon his scene the vision-like character we mentioned. Such unearthliness is not unnaturalness, because we may conceive it the nature of a purer sphere than our globe, where men and animals of a proportionable nature exist, and a landscape by Cuyp often seems taken from an orb nearer the sun, an orb saturated with sunlight till its substance has become rarefied, and comparatively buoyant, transparent, resplendent, as regards our dense, dusk, standard-planet called Earth. Look at the cow for example, upon the hill-top here: it is a cow, a beautiful creature after its kind, yet would afford if realized few solid pounds of flesh proportioned to its dimensions, it walks like one of Io's breed, or Apollo's cattle fed in yellow fields of asphodel along the golden-sanded river. Look at that tower afar off, it appears one of El Dorado's region. Were this immateriality made too perceptible, it would shock: Cuyp gives but just enough to produce idealization. We shall hazard another suggestion: his splendid atmosphere bespeaks a native of a *moist*

country. No such luminous haze hangs over a sun-dried land, or characterizes the noon-tide mist, which exhales from flood and fell, of any save the juiciest soil, with such palpable lustre,—lustre that “may be felt” Hence we opine the richer magnificence of Cuypp’s aerial perspective than Claude’s, the latter being more transpicuous ’ (1845)

The second refers to a *Portrait of the Artist and his Wife*, by Rubens, at Genoa.

‘Glorious Peter is here in his glory; a riot of gorgeous colours and energetic gestures His spouse is represented half tipsified, tossing her golden curls like a Bacchante, and bellowing an orgiac hymn like a Bistonian dame, as mad as a heifer turned out upon the hills to rage at large till she gets rid of the æstus that stings her Peter, the legal protector of his Frau’s purity, exposes almost as much of her neck and shoulders as if she were to be whipped by the beadle, and with his arm round this world of household virtues endeavours to paw away her bod-dice that the rest of her bosom may have full egress A Satyr (fit companion for these mythological Christians) looks on, an admiring spectator of their uxurious endearments. Yet, though it be the proper decoration of a bagnio, the picture is admirable in many particulars—colour, composition, handling and expression *Power* pervades it throughout, and power the most squeamish amateur must always respect . . .’ (1845.)

From Rubens we must jump to modern German art In Germany the classical revival preached by Winckelmann and practised with sad results by Rafael Mengs, Angelica Kauffmann, and Carstens (‘dead reputations’, says Darley) had been succeeded, at the turn of the century, by the religious enthusiasm of Wackenroder for the Middle Ages, a period which even for a critic of Lessing’s calibre had not existed. The new doctrines, preached at Dresden by the Schlegels, meant but a prolonging of the German period of imitation, though they were interpreted almost with fanaticism Artists yearned to become medieval masters, and to be informed with the medieval spirit. Such were the band called the Nazarenes whose head-quarters were at Rome. For the Greek ideal they had substituted the Christian faith of the early Italian painters

Darley, as we have seen, shared this enthusiasm for the early masters His attention, indeed, may have been turned to them by the fervour of the new cult. But he was the declared foe of all imitation. ‘It seems to me as if we had small chance of competing with the Greeks by clambering up the sides of their Parnassus—much less by keeping one foot upon that, and the other on a hil-

lock of our own, more than seven-league stride asunder'; so he had written of those who were imitating Greek sculpture. On the Nazarenes, therefore, he gave his verdict with emphasis. Here is his portrait of the ascetic Overbeck, written at Rome in 1834.

'Let us go to the Palazzo Cenci. There, under the mournful spell of that name, while the pale face of Beatrice, with its one deep shade of melancholy under the brow, seems to look back upon you from the stair-head, as she vanishes for ever—there, on tapping at a lofty door, it is opened by a slender, mild-looking, pallid figure, with narrow visage, but wide and somewhat wandering eyes, a black velvet *toque* on his black hair, divided *à la* Raffael, into two lank saintly locks that fall over his shoulder—this is Overbeck. . . I recollect some years ago, accidentally seeing at Paris a lithograph print of "Christ with the little Children" that was not Raffael's, but so raffaelsque as to make me curious about the imitator's name—'twas Overbeck. This is at once his merit and his defect, beautiful imitation. He is alternately Raffael, Leonardo, Luini, Massaccio, or sometimes all together—never himself—has no personal identity.'

When Darley visited Munich in 1834 he saw some of the chief results of the new movement in German art. There the illustrious name was Cornelius of Dusseldorf, 'our great Cornelius, *primo frescante* of the modern world'—that same Cornelius whose reputation may be measured by the fact that he was almost invited to be-fresco the new English Houses of Parliament. Darley was astonished to find that a man of intellectual power and talent, as Cornelius was, should be merely an imitator. His frescoes, and those of Schnorr, he found remarkable only for bad colouring. And he writes thus of a *Last Judgement* commanded by Ludwig I in which Cornelius grotesques the grotesque of Michaelangelo after the true spirit of German imitation.

'Grinning furies, grumacing sinners, claws, cloven hoofs, rake teeth, lappet ears—surely we have had enough of this baboon sublimity. 'Tis but another step to pitchforks and red-hot pincers. . . As to composition, have you ever played, when a good boy, at geographical joiery—making out a map of the world with little bits of wooden mosaic? Just like Cornelius's, and most German composition in painting. here a bit of Raffael, there of Michael, there of Albert Durer, Leonardo, Luini, Frate Angelico etc. Again, in costume, the Germans are often more old-fashioned than the old masters themselves. . . Is it because Perugino painted the Madonna in a mob-cap, or Francia the Holy Family enthroned between the jambs of a doorway, with three tufts of nettles for a landscape, that we are to do so? It may be very true, that these *naïve*

works are better than those in a more advanced style—but not on account of their mob-caps and tufts of nettle.’

In dealing with modern French art Darley did not see quite so clearly. The neo-classical school of David—who, as the Imperial painter, had for long imposed his barren doctrines on artists at the expense of originality—was threatened as soon as the peace of 1815 allowed English ‘romantic’ doctrine and example to penetrate into France. The decisive blow was dealt by the *salon* of 1824, at which Constable (with three pictures, including the *Hay-wain*), Lawrence, the Fieldings, and Bonington were represented. French painters were immediately fascinated by Constable’s bold handling of colour—his deeper qualities, those that went to the making of Corot, were appreciated later. Thus the change in taste was at first confined to discovering the possibilities of colour and romantic subject. Yet the school of David was not finally vanquished. Under the leadership of a much greater painter than David—Ingres—it still satisfied orthodox contemporaries.

Darley, naturally enough, did not grasp the whole situation. He had no conception of the stature and ultimate importance of Ingres. He never mentions the work of Constable. But he put his finger on some essential things. He was, of course, completely unsympathetic to David’s theory and practice, though he recognized how attractive these must be to a people with a leaning towards *le classique*; ‘you will read it gravely (and not metaphorically) laid down by their histories, that Frenchmen are *the last of the Romans*, and the modern representatives of the classic time’. Writing from Paris early in 1835 he says:

‘the school of Vien or David may be called the *ultra-classic*, or *stage-heroic* school, exhibiting the highest passions in the vulgarest style of play-house caricature, with the most cold-blooded calculation of effect, by way of Roman grandeur of soul and Greek propriety of judgment! . . . This school has just sent a President to the French Academy at Rome, in the person of M. Ingres. His predecessor there, H. Vernet, belongs to it. Gérard, with many others of first note, support it stoutly, and have . . . the national taste for all that is outrageously heroic in their favour. But, nevertheless, it would seem that this theatre of art is toppling. . . .’

That is one of several criticisms in a similar vein. The members of the school, such as Gros and Regnault, were, to Darley, little short of impotent in design, supposedly their great virtue.

David’s authority, then, was waning. In its place Darley noticed a movement ‘towards *natural feeling* and *good colour* instead

of *affectation* and *tawdriness*'. He is particularly insistent that it is 'colour' French art needs and is seeking.

'There are but two decidedly first-rate colourists of the French school—Claude and Watteau. Even of Claude it may be said, that he was less a fine colourist than a fine manager of certain colours. Set a landscape of his by one of Titian's, you will see the distinction. His scale is very confined: there is no autumnal foyson of tints as about the glorious Venetian's, no luxury of any colour but sunlight in his pictures. You may easily detect the national *sécheresse d'âme* in his works, rich as they are with eternal radiance, and magnificent for aerial perspective. He has not a due antipathy to what I may call candlelight effects of the sun,—a miserable juggle, which his countrymen are now so given to practice by way of *chiaroscuro*: placing objects between us and the blaze till they glitter round the edges like brass pans in a Dutch kitchen-piece. . . . Watteau has certainly a marvellous, though somewhat fantastic genius for colour. He is a toilette Rubens. Nothing can be more exquisite than the brilliant *summer* of his hues, varied and sparkling as the plumage of a humming-bird on the whirr, and not at all disfigured by the finest foppery of composition imaginable . . . No nation can furnish such a list of *bad* colourists, not to say indifferent . . . Glaring lights, lurid greys, carnations of mortified purple, brick brown, or sick claret, summer skies of an icy blue, verdure like flowers of verdigris.'

The old school, David's, he finds especially at fault.

'As to colour by way of the chaste were recommended huge blankets of uniform dye, for the most part a dull red, or pea-green, which latter seems to have still a fascination for French eyes perfectly irresistible. In general their tones were, to consort with the gravity of their classic, livid and chill, even amidst the glare and clash of the gaudiest colours. Remaining artists of this school paint the blessed sun himself as dull as a toasted cheese.'

Among the newer men he notices one historical painter of natural feeling, Delaroche, and one good colourist, Decamps, who, if not the first, is the most successful, and in vogue. 'From them a more poetic school of art may originate. Heaven send they prove better apostles than the poetic drama has had in Dumas and Victor Hugo.' He mentions also Delacroix, considered English 'because his colour is one degree above execrable', and Scheffer, recommended as perhaps the best colourist of his clique. But, adds Darley, 'so hard did he find the national genius to overcome, that he resorted to trick and mannerism for the purpose. He broke up his colours oftentimes to an artificial extent by way of giving his works morbidity, and laid them on so thick,

that his canvas looked like tarpaulin, rather pitched than painted, all of a blister.' The colouring of his *Francesca da Rimini* is 'somewhat in the style of a mortified Guido'.

Yet where, Darley asks, are the canonized artists of the modern French school, recognized as such beyond France? 'Will all their painters club perfections, and make a Lawrence or Turner?' Modern English art, he thinks, stands somewhat on the positive side of nonentity, while the French is even still on the negative. And after a reference to the current *Anglomana*, he adds: 'How soon the taste we have given them, not only as to colour but feeling, may enable them to outdo us, is neither for their vanity nor our contempt to pronounce. If the time be near it will come without much help from the critics. These are mostly in favour of the old school still.'

These judgements were written in 1835. Not till the end of 1845 was Darley, then an invalid, again in Paris, dealing with the same subject. On this occasion he remarks that the movement towards good colour continues, and that religious subjects are taking the place of classical, though 'statuesque painters still exist, who, like M. Ingres, keep this death-stricken school half alive by skilful treatment'. In reviewing an exhibition of pictures by late and living French artists (February 1846) he pays the correct tribute to David's portraits, though he finds no merit in his frigid historical works. 'David's unidealized portraits, however, have great merit. There is much nature, truth, and individuality about them; the touch is freer, the texture richer, the colouring pleasanter.' Two portraits by Ingres, *Comte Molé* and *M. Bertin l'Aîné*, are likewise praised; but his two *Odalisques*, and his *Francesca da Rimini* which proves him 'a bitter antagonist of the romantic', are heavily censured. 'M. Ingres paints blue silk very well: his cold, hard manner suits it: I have yet to find out his other merits; they appear somewhat recondite.' No works in the exhibition bear, says Darley, a more decided impress of genius than two caricatures by Charlet, *La Tête de la République* (a tattered old frost-bitten National Guard) and *La Queue de la République* (a lace-coated young general).

'They have the very rare merit with caricature of not being caricature—neither their forms, action, nor expression overcharged—yet each giving its subject the strongest characterism possible. They were done a short time before the artist's death, black chalks on blue paper, coloured here and there, the touch very free, the strokes few and simple.'

In the criticism of a later exhibition (March 1846) there is again mention of Decamps and Delacroix as colourists. The former, to get force 'lays on pigments with a trowel, till his work rather resembles plastering than painting; to get rich texture, he scrubs, and teases, and scrapes about this coarse mass' Delacroix, perhaps the next best French colourist, and reckoned by his countrymen a marvel, astonishes Darley by his bad draughtsmanship alone: his *Abduction of Rebecca* 'might be called very bad Etty,—the tints lurid, the touch loaded, the entire effect dull'. Much more interesting is the critic's hesitating surrender to a new charm, that found in certain pictures of Diaz de la Peña, a considerable light of the Barbizon school.

'... Genius itself must adopt eccentricities, if it would catch the public eye, bewildered amidst many objects. Thus, I suppose, the bizarre style of Diaz originated. Genius, however, drops the assumed manner, when once successful, talent cleaves to it, or it to talent, till the last. I doubt whether this artist could do anything good, except by dint of affectation, or will make the attempt. Nature cannot be kept out, we are told, but artifice is some persons' nature. Nothing more studiously freakish than his pictures did German brain ever produce, yet they appear thrown upon the canvas as checquer from a painted window upon a church pavement—sudden productions, vision-like, soft, and dim. Though, doubtless, of Spanish blood (Diaz de la Peña), his style recalls neither that of Murillo, Velasquez, Spagnoletto, nor any other peninsular artist. Pietro da Cortona's, with broad, mottled shadows, and sunlight reduced to miniature, may give you some idea of it. The execution corresponds in capriciousness with the colour: he often beautifies a defect into a kind of merit; makes, for instance, a confused, pulverose texture (looking less *scumbled* than *sanded*) at length have an air of agreeable softness, as if his work were seen through a mote-peopled sunbeam, not an atmosphere of dust. You wish to wipe the cotton-fuzz off *La Sagesse*, a female offered bouquets by Cupids—this is the picture's chief attraction—the down on the peach! And it does, somehow or other, take you. Again, the *Garden of Loves* has, at first sight, a decayed aspect—what our old poets called "morphew" (*mortefeuille*), what our picture-mongers would call "rotteness"—yet its dead Autumn character interests and pleases. This halo round decay sometimes amounts to artificial pollen, which the painter strews over his works, dense though distinct, like coloured stipple—a tangible cloud, a ponderable vapour—a molecular surface, that a bee's proboscis could pick up, or his little hairy thigh rub from the canvas, and thus transfer the precious film piecemeal to his cell,—bit by bit, the picture's whole fragile complexion! *La Magicienne* charms, despite—aye, in virtue—of its very meanness; does not a butterfly's wing

also? M. Diaz can quote Nature, as the Devil can scripture, for his purpose. It may be that my visionary temperament befools me, but, to confess the truth, I *am* caught by the *Forest View*: its tangled boughs and tendrils have laid their "lime twigs on my winged soul"—Duke Humfrey's clotted locks never held the Cardinal's after a more mysterious fashion. It is just the labyrinth wherein your day-dreamer loves to lose himself amidst fantastic uncertainties, which assume all shapes he lends them,—inarticulate whisperings which syllable whatever his meditations suggest,—aerial movements, and glances of light, and momentary shadows, convertible into angel visits, glitter of golden wings, and flutter of virgin garbs in the sun, or anything else, at his pleasure. *Les Délaisées* (Nymphs left forlorn by Love, who flies away from their secluded wild wood bower), one of those few allegories not frigid, because not far-fetched, but as expressive as figurative,—made me think of Alfred Tennyson's "Lotos Eaters." I can't tell why—perhaps from the voluptuous melancholy of both—there must be some secret link between the painted and the written poem—do you wonder the Forsaken attracted and entranced me? Yet here the same piquant mannerizing irked me still: like Macheath's love-making, it so teased and pleased my Miss Pollyish amateurship, that I took it for better and worse at last—'twas unavoidable—what I did you must have done!

A bare mention only can be made of Darley's writings on architecture and sculpture. He pleaded for an enlightened study of the principles of architecture, 'the most ideal of the arts', as a means of preventing the enormities that were being evolved in ignorance from incongruous styles. There was a danger, he thought, that Vulcan, the god of blacksmiths, would become the god of architects; 'iron should no more pretend to supplant or represent the beautiful stone-work of Pointed edifices, than stone the reticulations and convolutions of chain-work'. He was of opinion that 'any new style of *northern* architecture must be built on a Gothic foundation; which is to say, on those fundamental principles seized by the inventors of Gothic architecture as *home-born*, harmonious with their social and their physical position; much of both being still ours . . .'

He was indignant at England's neglect of her only sculptor, Flaxman, whom he eulogizes for his idealism in an age of materialism. Flaxman's chief lack he found to be in executive power, and his great virtue the realization of the architectonic principle in his art. Darley often refers to this principle. The modern monuments in Westminster Abbey are to him eyesores, 'marble hoddie-doddies', both spiritually and architecturally un-

befitting their station. He recommends that they be devoted to chimney-pieces, hearth-stones, and suburban gardens. Even Flaxman is not here at his happiest, Roubiliac is foppish and affected, and Chantrey's work is all admirable and all unsuitable, since 'from deficient combinative powers he could neither harmonize statue and statue, nor statue and architectural station'. The older tombs were much more suitable and impressive.

'Not to speak of the Parthenon, and other templar statuary among the Grecians, what a much truer instinct than we, as regards this said [architectonic] principle, had the Middle-age painters—e.g. Perugino, Van Eyck, Wohlgemuth—whose formal perpendicularity and severe parallelism of composition, however disagreeable when their altar-pieces are seen in drawing-rooms, fitted them with marvellous accord to their proper recesses in churches, of which they miniaturized the dominant forms, and preserved the rectilinear austereness down to the uttermost detail and very decorations! Nay, how much deeper were our old Gothic statue-makers penetrated by a sense of the architectonic principle than the modern—how much sublimer their inspiration, as well as more scientific their art. look at their Knights stretched lengthwise, sword at side, and leopard at feet, their Saints and solemn Kings standing upright in niches, their Priests kneeling, their Ladies slumbering, in fluted rochets or fardingales—all the attitudes, however stiff, all the lines, however ornamental, strictly architectonic, strictly harmonizing with the general character of the edifice that encloses them! Hence arises the one, undisturbed, overwhelming impressiveness of a Gothic cathedral, when permitted to retain even the ruinous integrity which Time may have left it. But when our pseudo-classic artists have leave to fritter away this grand effect with importunate statues, which seem to declare the cathedral meant, like a garden-house for plants, to shelter *them*, not themselves to enrich it, Sculpture becomes a most selfish Art, and a disfigurer of that Architecture it pretends to adorn.'¹

Some of Darley's opinions on modern English art have been gathered by the way. He had perhaps more fears for it than hopes, one of the chief fears being that English painting, with its tendency towards richness of colour, would become merely decorative at the bidding of middle-class patronage. Yet he appreciated what had been accomplished. Passavant, in his *Artistic Journey through England and Belgium* . . ., had suggested that

¹ Reference may be made here to a bitter protest against the 'restoration' of ancient statues (*Athenaeum*, 20 September 1834) and an excellent paper on arabesque and grotesque, which includes an interesting comparison between Giulio Romano and Spenser (*ibid.* 7 and 14 December 1844). Darley also speaks with acumen on the attempt to introduce fresco painting into England.

the English are not a sufficiently contemplative nation to excel in the higher provinces of art. Darley ridicules this assertion, and asks what the modern continental schools have done, compared with that of England.

'Of all modern painters, is not the first confessedly an Englishman—Reynolds? Is there any one other who has yet taken, by universal allowance, his niche among the ancients?—any one other—unless, indeed, it be Wilkie? For Hogarth, we can spare his works from painting to satire. Then as to architecture, the most ideal of the arts, pray in what circle of Germany is the pendant of St. Paul's?—of Italy? or of France? We speak of modern edifices. Considering the mass of colossal deformity that St. Peter's of Rome would present without its cupola and colonnade, we think it might well be asked, whether St. Paul's of London is not the greatest architectural work of the classic order since the Colosseum? . . . In sculpture, we have less pre-eminence notwithstanding the name of Flaxman, let us grant we have none . . . Would it not be well, if contemplative critics, ere they troubled their ingenuity, to explain *why* we should stand low in the arts, first proved that we *do*? Let them produce contemplative equivalents to Wren's Cathedral, Reynolds's Portraits, Wilkie's Cabinet-pictures, Wilson's, Gainsborough's, Turner's Landscapes—and then begin their demonstration.'

That is an early judgement, written in 1834. Elsewhere he praises Hogarth, 'the most thoroughly English among all our artists', and laments that his portraits are valued lightly when they appear in the sale-room. In pointing out the merits of Hogarth's *Miss Rich* he asks 'whether doth the livelier, brighter, purer and sweeter bloom distinguish Sir Thomas Lawrence's flower or Hogarth's, Countess Cawdor or Polly Rich?' Darley rarely, if ever, wrote notes on the Royal Academy or, indeed, on any exhibitions of contemporary pictures. Those criticisms, in the *Athenæum*, were entrusted to other hands, and no fervid appreciations of unimportant modern artists, such as surprise us in the writings even of Hazlitt and Ruskin, can be found in his work. His praise of Reynolds's great portraits, such as *Lord Rodney* and *Admiral Keppel*, is vivid and distinguished. A room devoted to Reynolds takes him nearer to the sun, 'the mellow, deep-toned lustre of this grandly-minded Painter's colouring seems to soften daylight, and produces an effect like that of a gorgeous summer-eve, when the broad shadows throw a solemn reflex over the spaces and spots most illuminated'. Yet he is no idolator. He points out that unsureness of touch and self-distrust often lead Reynolds into blind audacities, and he notices that the artist was

happier in works of Fancy, (*Gipsy telling Fortunes*) than of Imagination (*Count Ugolino*), where he often fails completely. Darley analyses the various styles of Wilkie, and finds that the artist 'is all himself, and in no part either a Dutch, Spanish, or Italian, but a wholly original and national painter', in such pictures as *The Rent Day* and the *Blind Fiddler*. His early appreciation of Gainsborough, written for Cunningham, has already been quoted. Of Constable he says nothing.

It is possible, though unlikely, that Darley was responsible, in whole or in part, for the review of a Royal Academy Exhibition—that of 1842.¹ To this exhibition Turner contributed five pictures. Two of these, landscapes of Venice, are mentioned in terms of admiration.

'The two Turners (*The Dogana, Venice* and the *Campo Santo*) are among the loveliest, because least exaggerated pictures, which this magician (for such he is, in right of his command over the spirits of Air, Fire and Water) has recently given us. Fairer dreams never floated past poet's eye, and the aspect of the City of Waters is hardly one iota idealized. As pieces of effect, too, these works are curious; close at hand, a splashed palette—an arm's length distant, a clear and delicate shadowing forth of a scene made up of crowded and minute objects! There is a poem, too, in the reflected sails of the boat, which glides along like some stately water-bird,—with a song, be sure, as she comes:—but we must not begin to rhapsodise.'

Very different, however, is the reception of Turner's other three pictures. *A Snow Storm* is, to the critic, a frantic puzzle. The painter has 'on former occasions chosen to paint with cream or chocolate, yolk of egg, or currant jelly,—here he uses his whole array of kitchen stuff'. *Peace (the Burial of Wilkie)* and *War. the Exile and the Rock-Limpet* are treated as still more provoking enigmas. The latter is thus described:

'In the midst of a canvas smeared with every shade of rose colour, crimson, vermilion, and orange, is set up a *thing*—man it assuredly is not:—there are birds in buckskin breeches, and frogs trying to seduce by their tight-waisted coats, in Grandville's inimitable *travesties*, which have a more human air than this effigy of Napoleon rolled out to a

¹ *Athenæum*, 7 and 14 May 1842. The writing often resembles Darley's, and he later refers to part of the review in such a way as to suggest that he agreed with it. On the other hand the articles are attributed to no one in the marked file of the *Athenæum* (Darley's contributions are usually carefully marked). In addition, there is a reference in a footnote to a portrait by Kaubach that 'might be seen at Munich in that artist's studio last autumn. A finer modern portrait does not exist.' Darley was not in Munich at that time.

colossal height, and whose presence could only be guessed, from the *daub* at his familiar costume, made by our dreamer. . . We will not endure the music of Berlioz, nor abide Hoffmann's fantasy pieces. Yet the former is orderly, and the latter are commonplace, compared with these outbreaks, whose perpetrator is nevertheless allowed places of honour for all the three.'

These contrasting opinions on his idol reached the young Ruskin at Geneva, and probably provided him with the immediate impulse to undertake that defence and interpretation of Turner foreshadowed as early as 1836 in the article replying to attacks made by *Blackwood's*. Ruskin was twenty-four years old when *Modern Painters, Their Superiority in the Art of Landscape Painting to all the Ancient Masters Proved . . .*, was published. An earnest young man with a turn for verse who was zealously pursuing his education in art. It is doubtful, as we have said, whether Darley wrote the offending criticism of Turner quoted above, but early in 1844 he reviewed the first volume of *Modern Painters*. Ruskin's editor, Sir E. T. Cook, quotes from this anonymous review to show that 'the old school of conventional art and ribald criticism did not surrender at sight'. About that 'old school' Sir E. T. Cook has not much of importance to say. He makes no attempt to show what Ruskin's place was in the history of art criticism. A few words on that point are necessary here.

Darley, as we have seen, was well equipped for his office of critic: much more securely based, indeed than a young amateur of twenty-four could hope to be. It is evident that he anticipates Ruskin in many ways. He takes his main stand in the past, preferring the old harmonies to the new unrest. He distrusts the scientific tendency of the age, and scourges its Philistine materialism. He believes in a hierarchy of schools and painters and subjects, emphasizing the supreme importance of spiritual values in a picture, attempting to reach the soul behind it. Thence springs his enthusiasm for the early masters, and that dangerous subjective habit, shared by Ruskin, of 'reading into' a picture abstract qualities. There is little difference, in the main, between his idea of the aim, scope, and value of art, and Ruskin's. Either of them might have written, 'painting or art, generally, as such, . . . is nothing but a noble and expressive language, invaluable as the vehicle of thoughts, but by itself nothing'.

Darley is then, to some degree, a precursor of Ruskin the art critic. He was a voice crying in the wilderness long before *Modern*

Painters was received with acclamation. But the reason why he remained unknown is sufficiently plain. He did not know exactly what he wanted, whereas Ruskin did know. His was a negative and sceptical, rather than a positive, voice. Ruskin, on the other hand, was full of affirmation and certainty, swimming easily with impressive strokes on the tide of faith. Tennyson and Browning were likewise happy in their hour. Darley and Beddoes had to struggle against the currents of doubt; Arnold and Clough were, in different fashion, to do the same.

Such coherency as Ruskin's writings on art have is due to the fact that he was a believer, brought up in evangelical strictness to the Hebraic conception of God. His immediate appeal to his generation is explained by the same reason. Man's function is to be the witness of God's glory. Ruskin finds and feels God in everything, all creation is His book. Beauty is the mysterious sign of God to man, having degrees proportioned to the moral value of the object. It is the expression of a spiritual energy, to be read everywhere by those who have eyes to read. Thus the artist is he who recognizes and interprets, according to his power, the writing of God. His gift is contemplative, not of the senses but of the soul. He must go to Nature, as priest or worshipper, to find Beauty, selecting nothing and rejecting nothing. Great art is but praise and adoration. Thus the supreme art is the Christian, since no other art has felt spiritually.

From such doctrines proceed elaborate classifications of arts, schools, and artists, according to their moral value. Thence also derive two sides of his teaching that cannot always be reconciled—his insistence on exact detail and his demand for poetic sensibility and religious feeling. In Turner he finds the artist who is unequalled in his knowledge of nature and in his interpretation of God's eternal language in all its laws and symbolism. He is a great painter because he translates, with exactitude, divine ideas.

Ruskin's strength has become his weakness. His contemporary appeal lay in the union of religious belief and lyric feeling, the whole expressed in ornate prose. Much virtue has gone out of these things as he uses them. He is no longer a prophet in art to the modern mind. The day when such a narrow conception of art as that suggested in the following sentences can be influential has, for the present, passed.

'I assert with sorrow, that all hitherto done in landscape, by those commonly conceived its masters, has never prompted one holy thought

in the minds of nations. It has begun and ended in exhibiting the dexterities of individuals, and conventionalities of systems. Filling the world with the honour of Claude and Salvator, it has never once tended to the honour of God.¹

Darley would have shrunk from so pious a generalization. *Modern Painters* takes its place as a document in criticism, but it is probably more often read for its appreciations of nature and individual pictures, than for its theories. If there is a good deal of Wordsworth and something of Chateaubriand in Ruskin, there is also not a little of Bernardin de Saint-Pierre.

The successive volumes of *Modern Painters* appeared between 1843 and 1860, and were 'in some respects independent works'. The author modified his judgements on particular schools of painting and artists from time to time, and the text, especially that of the first volume, was considerably altered. Yet whether it be regarded as one work or a series of works it must be pronounced dropsical, an undertaking swollen beyond natural compass by fluent writing. Darley, of course, knew only the Ruskin of the first two volumes, many parts of which their author later acknowledged to be 'written in a narrow enthusiasm'. Since he had for many years called attention to certain qualities in art that Ruskin also particularly emphasized, it is interesting to see how he regards the new writer.

The first volume of *Modern Painters*, devoted to the destruction of the ancient landscape painters and the glory of Turner, is an immature work that has worn badly. In order to prepare for a proper understanding of Turner, Ruskin was betrayed into an exaggeration of blame and an extravagance of praise. Darley's review, which is by no means one of his best, appeared in the *Athenæum*.²

He found it difficult to take the work very seriously. It was for him a book intended to make a sensation, fantastic alike in its abuse of the old masters and its glorification of Turner. Such statements as, 'He is above all criticism, beyond all animadversion, and beyond all praise. His works are not to be received as in any way subjects or matters of opinion; but of *Faith*', were, for Darley, just not blasphemous because crack-brained. It amused him to find a man who claimed such distinction for his idol heaping abuse on works of reputation, and he felt that it might have been sufficient merely to state Ruskin's creed to controvert

² 3 and 10 February 1844

it, 'that the most erratic genius among all Modern Painters exhibits in his works a consolidated fund of perfections without the shadow of a single fault'. Ruskin's claims seemed to Darley ridiculous.

'Hear Fuseli talk of Michael, and Mengs of Raffael, you will think them the so-called archangels become artists, hear our Oxford Graduate talk of Mr Turner, and you will suspect that either St Luke, the patron of painting, must have rapt the artist into the seventh heaven, or St Luke, the patron of lunatics, must have carried off the author.'

Yet it is a clever book, neither less nor more, with too much parade of logic and too little real power. 'It exhibits what may recommend it to many readers, some characteristics of Hazlitt's style—boldness and brilliancy, bigotry amidst liberality, and great acuteness amid still greater blindness.' The author declares himself an artist; the reviewer guesses that he is a *water-colourist*. That, however, is not charged as a positive disqualification.

Darley found Ruskin's intemperance the more ridiculous because there was a case for him to make out

'It has always been our opinion, that but few landscapes by the ancient masters deserve to rank among first-rate productions of art . . . even Claude's performances have often left little deeper impressions upon us than so many glass-windows. . . . Had our author been content to reduce popular reverence on this subject within just bounds, we should have approved his efforts, but when he pronounces Claude, Salvator, and Poussin "contemptible", when in the same unscrupulous style he bespatters all the old landscapists with foul epithets . . . it only proves his language stronger than his judgment.'

Though the book gave him the impression that the author could, if the maggot bit him, spin as fine a harangue about Claude's wonderful works as Turner's, yet Darley recognized that it contains 'a good deal of truth, even amidst its manifold inconsistencies'. Thus although it begins by pronouncing Claude, Salvator, and Poussin contemptible, 'it ends with eating up about half that oracle'. And perhaps, Darley suggests, the second volume may rehabilitate even Vandervelde and Backhuysen. But the author must acquaint himself with the ancient masters he criticizes.

'How such a grand-tourist as he proclaims himself should not say one word of the sublime Pitti Salvators, Nicolas Poussin's "Great Flood", Gaspar's *chefs-d'œuvre* in San Martino, the Brera Giorgione, the Fesch Rembrandt, the Camuccini Titian, various fine Claudes and magnificent

Cuyps throughout England, numberless other splendid landscapes everywhere, puzzles conjecture, or rather is plain enough.'

A little information has qualified him to condemn where much knowledge would have made him cautious.

'He finds just the basis that suits his temple raised to divine Mr Turner . . . in a few Claudes, most of which abler connoisseurs than ourselves deem second-rate, or apocryphal, specimens, and a few Salvators, Poussins etc, which *he* deems first rate, whether apocryphal or not, at the London and Dulwich galleries Yet even on this narrow ground we might perplex his self-complacence by a very simple question—where is the oil-picture from Mr Turner's hand equal to the worst Claude of the National Collection? Let him spend no more logic demonstrating what vile things the old landscapes are, how and why and wherefore they are beneath the modern,—but just point us out that one oil-work of his impeccable that can justly compete *even* with the "St Ursula"!'

This challenge brings Darley into conflict with the theory, to him a heresy, of direct imitation of nature that he had already combated in dealing with Hazlitt In Ruskin this took the form of exact rendering of detail, and was to lead to the blind alley of Pre-Raphaelitism. In Darley's view Ruskin had omitted 'the true principles of landscape painting, or if mentioned, has misunderstood their value and virtue'. He proceeds.

'He seems to think landscapes should be, throughout their details, little facsimiles of real objects, and that no other merit surpasses minute faithfulness. He cannot conceive, for example, the "St. Ursula", with its buckram waves, hopping figures, and false perspective, nevertheless a far more excellent work than "The Exile and the Rock Limpet", were thus as faithful as he imagines it. He professes, indeed, a noble disdain of servile imitation in art, but half his book is a ding-dong against the Ancient Masters on its sole account—Salvator's rocks are not stratified, Poussin's leaves not botanical, Cuyp's clouds not *curro-strate*, etc —none of these artists exhibit what he and the newspaper critics call "truthfulness to nature".

'He would have geologic landscape-painters, dendrologic, meteorologic, and doubtless entomologic, ichthyologic, every kind of physiologic painter, united in the same person; yet alas for true poetic art amidst all these learned Thebans! No, landscape-painting must not be reduced to mere portraiture—portraiture of inanimate substances—*Denner-like* portraiture of the Earth's face, with all its wrinkles and pimples, line by line, shade by shade. As we have said elsewhere, if people want to see Nature let them go and look at *herself*, wherefore should they come to

* Balthasar Denner, 1685-1749, a German painter.

see her at second-hand on a poor little piece of plastered canvas? We disapprove the "natural style" in painting, not because we dislike Nature, but because we adore her, she is so far above any imitation of her, that the very best disappoints us and dissatisfies. Ancient landscapists took a broader, deeper, higher view of their art: they neglected particular traits, and gave only general features: thus they attained mass, and force, harmonious union, and simple effect, the elements of grandeur and beauty.

Finally, the Graduate of Oxford is warned that he has mistaken himself no less than the ancient masters. His forte is fine writing, the reverse of sound reasoning; and the review ends with a long quotation to convince him of his error.

Ruskin replied to part of Darley's criticism in the preface to the second edition of his book published in 1844. He confines his remarks to the principles of landscape painting stated by Darley. To such criticism, he says, the answer is simple and straightforward

'It is just as impossible to generalize granite and slate, as it is to generalize a man and a cow. An animal must be either one animal or another animal: it cannot be a general animal or it is no animal, and so a rock must be either one rock or another rock, it cannot be a general rock, or it is no rock. If there were a creature in the foreground of a picture of which he could not decide whether it were a pony or a pig, the *Athenæum* critic would perhaps affirm it to be a generalization of pony and pig, and consequently a high example of "harmonious union and simple effect". But I should call it simple bad drawing . . . I repeat then, generalization . . . is the act of a vulgar, incapable and unthinking mind.'

That, of course, is not a sufficient answer to Darley's criticism. Neither does the statement 'that the simple and uncombined landscape, if wrought out with due attention to the ideal beauty of the features it includes, will always be the most powerful in its appeal to the heart', which wavers on the word 'ideal', help much. The course of modern landscape painting, descending through Constable to the Impressionists and their successors, approves Darley rather than Ruskin.

The second volume of *Modern Painters*, published in 1846, won, as was natural, more approval from Darley.¹ The review, however, does not do justice to the book, for Darley was at this time a dying man. He begins with a note of self-congratulation,

¹ *Athenæum*, 25 July 1846.

asserting that the author has benefited from his criticism because the work is disfigured by fewer offences against taste. Ruskin is accused of being still rash to temerity in statement, a Zimri in criticism,

So over-violent or over-civil,
That every man with him is god or devil!

and Darley indulges in much petty and unimportant fault-finding without facing the issues. But he takes leave of the Graduate of Oxford with regret, recommending his 'very perturbative volume' in these terms to all who love intellectual agitation.

'And still—and still—notwithstanding what we have said, and left unsaid, about the faults and follies committed [in] almost every page, almost every paragraph—the book before us deserves perusal, deserves praise. Never did we see such acuteness and confusedness of mind—such power and impotence—such trains of error and of truest deduction—such pure taste and perverted judgment—such high and low feeling for Art—we must add, such an elevated and vulgarian spirit of criticism—evinced in any treatise pretending to legislate upon Aesthetics—Mr. Turner's *quondam* idolator will even yet, we have no doubt, take it as a high compliment (whatever the world may do), when we tell him, his writings greatly resemble the paintings of his god-pictorial; they are full of Turnerisms turned into words—beauties, garish brilliancies, incomprehensibilities and absurdities, all mingled together—pictures of thought which Chaos would love to contemplate, and could not more confuse; but which Splendour would love to rub her fleecy skirts against, for the sake of the lustrous colours,—yea, Imagination love to glance at, for the rays of light they dart forth from the darkest points, with the vividness of sparks from coal-black eyes—Here, a sun-stroke blinds; here, a sun-burst illumines, here, a monstrosity raises your gorge, here it tickles your midriff, here, a sublime conception lifts you off your feet, and here, again, some bombast circumstance tells you how close in what you peruse is the sublime to the ridiculous. Iris has dipped the whole woof to be sure, but this part when she was sober, this when fuddled, this when drunk: nevertheless, when intoxicated, it is by *nectar*—or, if not by this, by downright "fire-water", vitriolized gin, and then, whew! the goddess becomes a perfect Doll Tearsheet, steels her purpled scarf through every yellow and green and blood-stained puddle she passes—twists it round her heated brain as half night-cap half turban, and flirts its bedraggled tails at the very deified of mankind, careless whether she hit Jupiter himself! This perpetual alternation between our author's hard-headed and his hare-brained discussions—his sound reasonings and rhodomontades—reminds us always of the man who jumped into the quickset hedge and thus scratched his eyes both out and in again, *per saltum*. One

while so sagacious, he appears the Seven Wise Men of Greece consolidated, another while so short-sighted, he appears the Seven Wise Men of Gotham incorporated. Now we think he may be a veritable Oxford Graduate, now we feel assured he must be a Graduate of Laputa! Many persons would allege that throughout the whole book his wits were evidently wandering: no! wool-gathering they sometimes were indeed, yet even then it was often for the Golden Fleece. Pretty similar things criticism might perhaps say of his idol's later productions, but he should take care, like Mallord Turner, to have done great deeds before he goes moonstruck altogether.

That might have been said in fewer words, but it is nevertheless on the whole a just tribute, and one not to be despised. It is fitting that in this, his last review, Darley should have encountered his famous successor.

VIII. 1836-1841

Contributor to 'The Tribute' Letters to the 'Athenæum' from Berlin and Dresden Visit to Ireland 'Thomas à Becket' Introduction to an edition of Beaumont and Fletcher 'Ethelstan'. Letters to Milnes, Henry Darley, Procter, Laura Darley, Lady Morgan.

IN the spring of 1836 Milnes returned from Fryston, the family seat near Wakefield, to London, where his parents had taken a house for the season in South Street, Hyde Park. This was his formal introduction to that social life in which he moved from the first with conspicuous distinction. Every good fairy seemed to have blessed his cradle. He was now twenty-seven years old, captivating, sensitive, and impulsive, fond of pleasure and yet no slave to it, a wealthy man with friends of mark who expected much from him. Acquaintance with society on the Continent had given him a vivacity and breadth of view rare among the young men of his day. Soon he was an intimate member of circles so widely different as those of Holland House, Lansdowne House, Gore House, and the Sterling Club. He was equally at home with Carlyle and Walpole's two Miss Berrys. His breakfasts—he had a prodigious appetite for celebrities, actual and potential—rivalled those of Rogers. Already he had some repute as a poet; and he was ambitious to excel not only in literature, but in the worlds of fashion and politics as well. Few men have been blessed with so many talents. But in their number and attractiveness lay danger, since it was impossible for one man to make the best of them all. The wicked fairy who had denied him pre-eminence in any one pursuit could not, however, mar the chivalry and variety of the man.

It says much for his kind heart that he should, at such a busy time, persevere in his friendship with a man so obstinately unsocial as Darley. He wrote to him soon after his arrival at South Street. Darley replied that he should be busy for some days, 'making muttonchops'. The next letter contains a reference to Rio's book.

(To R. M. Milnes Esq Junr
31 South Street)

Clarence Club
Friday
[June? 1836.]

My dear Milnes,

I like your friend Rio's volume (as far as read) extremely—there is a high order of feeling & thought about it on the subject of Painting. Alas!

I fear it will be but little appreciated by our lovers of Dog-pieces & Portraits! However, as far as my very slender connoissance & the contracted spaces of the Athenæum will permit, all possible justice shall be done to a work of so much merit. Do not take 'delay for denial'—I have far more grateful occupations than criticism to follow.

Has a copy been sent to the Editor—or shall I send mine? I do not like him to think we make a mere funnel of his paper for our own objects. Could you also tell me, exactly, why the Irish mode of publication has been followed—part 2^d before part 1st? And if the 1st part be actually written, and what it would be about? The work will have else a suspicious look. Is there a London publisher, & who?

Your own projected Review in the British & Foreign would be far preferable—and if you be careful to avoid the *technique* (about which you know *nothing*), I have no doubt you will do it spiritually & judiciously. Any little technic details within my power, I would be glad to help you with.

Very best regards to all at South Street—they know what a human Auk I am, and will therefore excuse my never writing

Ever sincerely your's

George Darley.

Owing to Darley's illness the writing of the promised review was delayed. When explaining the matter to Milnes, he mentions his visit to Oxford, and his introduction to Newman, who impressed him very favourably.

(To R. M. Milnes Esq. Jun^r

Fryston

Ferrybridge Yorkshire.)

27 Up Eaton St Pimlico.

24 Oc 36.

My dear Milnes

Tho scarcely able to write a line I attempt to do so, being ill at ease with respect to the unfulfilment of my promise about Rio's volume. The neglect is altogether involuntary—I have been for two months unable to write a paragraph by reason of incessant headache—it is I fear the most immortal thing about me—with it I get up in the morning, lie down at night, and with it I expect to go to my grave, perhaps rise with it hereafter among the tortured. All my engagements & occupations are at a dead stop—I can do nothing but groan. Several works to notice have lain still longer on my hands than *La Poésie Chrétienne*—Lessing^r appeared but t'other day for want of the last few lines. My doctors tell me I have blood to the head—that most terrific disease to one like me whose entire pleasure & life is in mental occupation. I am condemned

* An interesting review of W. Ross's translation (the first in English) of the *Laocoon*, published in the *Athenæum* of 8 October 1836. The two articles on Rio's book appeared next year, on 22 April and 13 May.

to 'idle about & amuse myself'—the saddest thing to me under the sun—for tho' never very industrious, I find idleness the most wearisome of all states—to parade for amusement is still worse, when I must look at everything with a bloodshot eye, and hear every little sound magnified into a confused hum, as if my head were a beehive. At this moment I feel as if I were sitting in the Devil's own state, my temples bound with a red-hot iron crown. This upward tendency of the blood upon any exertion of the brain seems to draw every drop into my head as if that were the only vacuum. Nevertheless I will endure all with my best strength, hoping it may be a sort of purgatory before death which may perhaps mitigate that to come. But indeed it is very difficult to contend with a disease that forbids me the dearest exercise of my mind, & the few poor comforts of which I am capable. With such unprolific powers as mine I need all the advantages of good health to render them profitable, yet for two days out of every three, throughout the year, I am paralysed by this sanguinary headache. In very truth I begin to look upon the winding sheet as the most comfortable of all bed-clothes, & am ready to exclaim as Sancho did about the *blanket* of sleep—'blessings on him that invented it'. However this is very doleful cheerfulness & not keeping up to my bravado above.

I went for six weeks to Oxford, in hopes of benefit from *rustication* there. Many things interested me in that city of monasteries, which I attempted to jot down for the Athenæum but could not 'do up'. Of course you are at home there, altho a Cantab. I saw by happy chance Acland¹ at church, & breakfasted with him at All Souls. He introduced me to Mr. Newman of Oriel² (whom no doubt you have heard of, if not heard)—one of the few like himself, whose acquaintanceship sweetens my blood. He has that rare duality in unity—goodness of mind we can easily meet with the rascal intellectual, more so still with the good & foolish, but what I speak of is something more than intellectuality *plus* goodness, if I had head to explain it.

As soon as my brain goes off the boil, which it must soon do after all this cupping, physicking, & physiciating, I will perform my promise—tho without doubt your friend's work stands in no need of such a notice as I could give.

Do you come soon to town? I have not seen Tennyson. Pray give my best wishes to all your Family, who I hope are as well as I wish them.

Ever your's my dear Milnes

George Darley.

I don't know where Westenra is, so cannot frank you this

¹ Thomas Dyke Acland (1809-95), politician and educational reformer, at this time a Fellow of All Souls. He was a friend of Milnes and member of the Sterling Club.

² Newman was at this time writing in defence of Anglo-Catholicism. His influence at Oxford was now at its height.

During the winter of 1836 Milnes was occupied in obtaining contributions from his friends for a volume that Lord Northampton intended to publish on behalf of the destitute family of a man of letters. One request, that to Tennyson, almost led to a quarrel. Milnes, anticipating no refusal, said he had half promised that Tennyson would send 'something pretty considerable'. The latter, by no means pleased, affected to treat this statement as an elegant fiction, and told Milnes that he had sworn an oath never again to have anything to do with such vapid books as annuals. Milnes, suspecting 'insolent irony', wrote a furiously angry reply, which Tennyson with happy tact turned aside by a model soft answer. Later he sent the famous stanzas round which *Maud* was built, and obtained contributions from his brothers, Charles and Frederick. Milnes also wrote to Darley for his help. It was willingly accorded. His reply, which shows a curiosity about Tennyson evidently whetted by what Milnes had told him, contains proof that he could praise contemporary work when it deserved praise.

(R. M. Milnes Esq. Jun^r,

Fryston

Ferrybridge

Yorkshire)

[Clarence Club]

Nov. 23 [1836].

My dear Milnes

A good deal better. By draining some time on the surgeon-apothecary's shambles, & scorching off my scalp with acids, & taking as many balls & drenches as w^d have reduced a Flemish drayhorse to a Welsh poney, I have got considerable relief. Not that you must imagine me so gaunt & grim after all—everyone compliments me on my blooming complexion (I wish it were in a blossom at the end of their noses!)—but I had rather be as bloodless as Death's pale horse if I c^d be in as good 'working order'. Anything like mental effort (& such is the sluggish nature of my mind that I must either think intensely or not at all), acting thro' my system drives the blood up into my head like a force-pump. My brain is so dry that I must squeeze for an 'effusion', & then the blood comes along with it. I feel at times drawn up by the crown as a stone is by a string & wet leather. Dont you think the stomach is the chief seat of the soul? If mine were like Taghioni's in the feet it would be clear enough. I am now groping out my pothooks to you like Polyphemus writing with the burnt stake to little Enceladus an account of his blindness—for there are as many 'damned spots' in my eyesight as in Macbeth's when he saw the bloody dagger. But it is impossible for me to

send you a bare bulletin—that would be too consequential. As it is my letter resembles one sufficiently, writ from the field of battle, it is so horribly stained with blood. My head seems indeed to be full of it, for I can sputter it as if I had come from a feast with the cannibals or Feefafum.

Eleleu! (the Greek for our Irish *whiloo*, mind ye!) *come*, oh me! that I cannot accept your kindest invitation to Yorkshire & poetic talk with yourself & Tennyson.¹ Is he a catharine-wheel of splendid emanations? How I envy you the power of communing with such minds!—envy you what I could never enjoy. An opportunity which I cannot take only tantalizes & tears me into madness, as the devil did the swine. But what can T have to drown him in the slough of despond, as you tell me, if he retain the free use of his faculties? And that he does, witness his pearly little Keepsake Song.² I caught a glumpse of the lustrous little thing in the Annual dunghill which Lady Emily Somebody rakes together—and crowed, being a better judge of jewels than corn. Am I to take the Song as a palinode from his affected to a pure style? Let him go on in this way, & he will leave us all behind him—*us* I say, as if I had ever been abreast with him. No one says a word for poor Nepenthe, except Miss Mitford who wrote me a prose hymn in praise of it—‘*egad!*’ as Sir Fretful says ‘the women are the best judges after all!’ But what can be the worm at Tennyson’s heart? Is he in the flames, furies, & tortures, agonies & excruciations of the ‘tender passion’? Let him think of me—my heart is in the grave—I have been luckless in every hope, expectancy, & ambition—my way of life has always been in the gloom, & is now in the shadow of death—I have ‘browsed upon worm-wood’—must henceforth earn my bread in the bloody sweat of my brow—without a prospect before me but a slide into my tomb made slippery with the same. Yet you see I can jest & throw flowers at the hideous Fate that pursues me. Ah *caro mio!* we sons of poetry & poverty are all joint-heirs to the crown of thorns, & we must only take off its sharpness by entwining it with all the roses we can. There’s a sprig of my poetic philosophy—he is welcome to a cutting, it will shoot anywhere.

Lord N. of course enlisted you both for his kindhearted project—it is the sole description of charity to which I can contribute, & will do so with greatest pleasure. Alack! for the power to put my hand into a richer scrapbook than mine, & bestow something more than a halfpenny ballad. Indeed I don’t know what to send. All my *scraps* are either as long as a lawyer’s brief or as little attractive. Something ‘popular’ you say—bless your five wits, I could never write anything popular in my life! Now if you had asked me for words to a Hosanna, it w^d have been comparatively reasonable. I’ve none of Wordy’s omnipotent knack of

¹ Tennyson was invited to Fryston for December, it seems uncertain whether he went.

² *St. Agnes*, published in the *Keepsake* (1837), edited by Lady Emmeline Stuart Wortley.

writing upon all turn-ups Without a promontory of thought from which to spring, I make as awkward & unwieldy attempts at empyrean flights as a *dodo*. Once on a time indeed I thought that being a sub-creator (under God, the First & infinitely sublime Poiētes) I could make a world of verse out of nothing—but I have lost almost all my *concert*, which I regret as it was the better part of my inspiration What with this down-come & the decline of my health & drooping of this weary head towards my pillow of dust, I do not think I shall ever write another happy couplet but my epitaph Triplet of words it shall be—I have just thought of it—

MIHI, ET SILENTIO

Remember, that is to be on my tombstone. Dont you think it very *all-expressive*?

Do you read Spenser? I have been endeavoring to cool my brain by a dip into his fairy well He comes next on the glorious scroll to Milton—with less might & majesty, but with a wonderful power of gentleness working portentous effects. His imagination does not astonish with such a sudden flash & thunder-clap every moment as Shakespeare's—nor has he his greatness of manner, his oceanic flow of mind—but rather runs dimpling on like a golden-sanded stream wave after wave of the richest outpouring—dip into him you.

I believe this is the quill of a wild-goose, it has been aiding & abetting so much flighty gabble You will conclude I have indeed got a brain-fever 'Bless thee from star-blasting!'

Yr's George Darley

(To R M Milnes Esq Junr

Fryston

Ferrybridge Yorkshire)

Sat.

[No address or date]

[December? 1836]

My dear friend,

On receiving your last I sat down to write something quasi-popular—but became too much excited & was obliged to desist. I send you instead a set of fantasies ('fy'on sinful fantasy!') from my scrapbook—which I hope may answer Lord Northampton's purpose They are too long I am aware—but do not like dividing them, as any little power they have lies in their conjunction Use any of the former I may have given you, if you prefer—that one containing your favorite line 'the field of the cloth of gold'¹ is published already in the *Athenæum*. I believe no other.

God bless you! I am much better—everywhere but where I am incurable—my *caput mortuum*, the heart.

G D

I conclude you at Castle Ashby.²

¹ *Hymn to the Sun. Athenæum*, 22 October 1836

² Lord Northampton's seat.

The *Tribute* was published by Murray in the summer of 1837. It is a collection of work by all the talents. Bernard Barton (given pride of place), Wordsworth, Moore, Southey, Henry Taylor, Landor, Aubrey de Vere, and Doyle were all represented. Darley's contribution, six 'Syren Songs', contains some of his most distinctive writing. These lyrics were taken from a manuscript called *The Sea-Bride* which must have ranked with his best work, if it was ever finished, and may be judged by them.

Early in January 1837 Lytton Bulwer's play, *The Duchess de la Vallière*, was produced, with Macready as Bragelone and Miss Faucit as La Vallière. Darley reviewed the book some weeks later, and his unqualified severity gave great offence to the author. He confessed that he was not disappointed with the drama, since neither from the age nor the author did he expect better. He showed that it was wanting in all the qualities necessary to a good drama, and as a special mark of debility in the printed version he instanced the 'impotent words, given factitious force by dint of italics'. 'We can scarce', he continued, 'detect one elementary particle of dramatic power developing or threatening to develop itself . . . we counsel him never to attempt another play of the serious kind—it would be the death of his reputation, and no new life to tragedy.'

Writing to Kelsall from Zurich in March 1837, Beddoes states that he is preparing a volume for the press (*The Ivory Gate*, a miscellany never published), and after mentioning the ever-present *Death's Jest Book*, he says of Darley: 'G. D. appears to me to have grown deuced grey, whether it be the greyness of dawn, of life's evening twilight, or of a nascent asinine metempsychosis I cannot distinguish at this distance.' It would be interesting to know what his reasons for this remark were, since he would certainly have recognized his friend John Lacy in the *Athenæum* reviews.

Darley was one of the many friends entertained by Milnes at Fryston in the autumn of this year.¹ His particular reason for going to Fryston, we are told, was to meet Tennyson. It is uncertain whether the meeting between the two poets took place then, but it is known that they did eventually come together. Tennyson admired Darley's work and urged him to publish a collection of his poems; and he has been credited with the offer to bear the

¹ Probably the best account of Fryston is that given by Carlyle in a letter to his wife of 10 April 1841. Wemyss Reid's *Life of Milnes*, vol. 1, pp. 255-8

expense. This report seems open to some doubt, since Tennyson was for many years yet a poor man. Darley, it is said, declined the generous proposal. At this time, before Tennyson had reinforced the volume of 1833 with those of 1842, he was in the opinion of many as good a poet as there was in England.

Darley's stay at Fryston cannot have been a long one, for the first of his four letters from Berlin was published in the *Athenæum* on 21 October. The main object of his visit was to see the art collections, and he has much to say about the Berlin Museum and its contents, particularly its great boast the old Flemish department, where the Van Eycks (bought absurdly cheaply) and the Memlings rouse his envy. He finds the gallery deficient in first-rate works. This did not surprise him, since Prussia came last, as a gleaner, into the field of Fine Art. Yet he considers it peculiarly suited to students because representative, and he pays a compliment to the excellent catalogue of his friend Dr Waagen. Architecture also interests him, and he discusses the various buildings of Schinkel, 'now the greatest living architectural name in Europe'. Everything, he remarks, is matter of police in Prussia; 'the very grass, I believe, has a passport for appearing in the country, which makes it so scarce.' After praising the *Thurgarten* and the *Unter den Linden*, he comments thus on the city and its inhabitants.

'Berlin proper is but a central district of the whole city, without any other pre-eminence than in age and unloveliness. No part of the metropolis, however, can be pronounced altogether ugly. A certain air of pallid or livid splendour, according as the streets are new or old, reigns throughout. due, perhaps, much to the cement substituted for stone, in almost all the buildings, a composition which looks garish a month or so, paltry ever after. In general the streets are very wide, very long, and very straight, as if the lines had been carried by cannon-shot: this gives the town a formal, platooned appearance. the houses being all exactly abreast, and of one battalion height, seem to stand upon eternal drill, where they fell at first into rank and file, at a word from sovereign quarters; there is none of the picturesque over-topping and out-jutting which give other German towns so much the look of natural cliff scenery. Notwithstanding its magnificence, this monotony of architecture at Berlin soon grows dull: the riches of decoration, under which its real meagreness is sought to be hidden, can no more exhilarate the spirits than silver arabesques and shining studs on a coffin. Architectural embellishment, indeed, spreads over the house fronts here like wall-fruit: every penny shopkeeper and wretched retailer has a twisted cornice or set of capitals above his signboard; a Corinthian façade admits into a green-grocery,

and a cobbler's bulk is sheltered by a classic entablature. These are among the ridiculous results of raising a hot-bed capital! . . .

'The Prussians are grave, long-visaged, and not unhandsome. a cross-bred race, but oftener of the dark blood which shows itself in black hair and morone skins, than of the lighter, which gives to Germans commonly their whitey-brown locks and complexions. Perhaps, from the number and picked nature of the military at Berlin, its inhabitants strike a new comer as tall, well made, and straight to stiffness, being essentially, both male and female, a grenadier population. Soldiers, however, do not beset the streets so much as is thought; Paris has more the air of a city under martial law, is oftener haunted by capering hussars, and frightened from its small share of propriety by the rattle of drums and of cannon, our own "Guards" walk about in a much more domineering style, as if they were all of the Wellesley family. With regard to the manners of the Prussians, everywhere I have met them, they are a great deal civiler by nature than our countrymen can be by the help of Chesterfield and Grandison, on public duty a Prussian mitigates, an Englishman aggravates, its rigour as far as possible, though I grant it makes little difference in the main, whether you are coerced with a polished bayonet or a knotted bludgeon. As to the matter of mental cultivation, I had short time for personal inquiry. which seemed, however, sufficient, their own well-informed townsmen whom I conversed with designating the Berliners *barbarians*. Love of the Fine Arts is a good test, and of this they have little or none. . . .

'Frederic the Great, after his usual style of a military omnipotent, said, Let there be art, and there was art. hence it is that so much of the sculpture and architecture here, as well as at Potsdam, has the look of being done by contract. . . . Several of the public buildings display the petty side of the great Prussian's mind—his Louis-Quatorze taste in matters of art. . . . Nevertheless, even the preposterous style is better than the pitiful; no such architectural eyesore, no such miserable compound of the trivial and the tawdry, exists in Berlin as our own Buckingham Palace, on whose dome, as a scaffold, the Genius of British taste in the reign of George the Fourth, is gibbeted to perpetual disgrace and derision. . . .

'Notwithstanding this large and learned Institution [the University] at the city heart, I never observed the Academic shade so faint upon the aspect of any population; spectacles and lank hair, if nothing else, give a studious look to the youth of most German towns; here neither one nor other is much worn, and there is no substitute; every mien composed, but not at all absorbed, every face drawn to full length, but not with solemn or serious reflection: having their military character in my head, it seemed to me as if each person were chiefly intent on keeping his chin at parade level, and the proper foot foremost, I saw little other appearance of study. When not thus at march, so to say, on their various

promenades, their favourite resorts are coffee-houses, or *conditoreien* (confectionary cafés), where they² indulge themselves in bad pastry and bonbons to a childish extent, but with as much temperance of conduct and discourse as if each had a dragoon behind him. Soldierly tactique seems to make them always keep a good reserve of conversation, for they seldom bring more force into play at once than may just serve to maintain the show of intellectual conflict. This frugal expenditure of mind is grateful to an Englishman, whether from its keeping him in countenance, or sparing him the apish chatter and grimace which disfigures social intercourse so much amongst a nation whose plume is its colloquial power. On the whole, I think the Prussians, in every light, the most *respectable* people of Europe.'

Darley was back again at his reviewing early in January 1838. There is no record of any other work he may have been writing, save the occasional lyrics he still published. No doubt he was busy with something that should succeed *Nepenthe*. It was nearly three years since he printed that rhapsody, and he was no closer to a meed of general recognition now than he was then. Many things—lack of power to finish work begun, dissatisfaction with it, or inability to find a publisher—may account for this, but it is curious that he should never have made a book of his lyrics. Perhaps he considered them small things, and was ambitious of a more emphatic triumph. That he was still ambitious admits of no question, and though he may often have despaired of success, he had received sufficient praise to keep his introspective mind on the rack of doubt.

Milnes remained his good friend. After the dissolution consequent on the death of William IV, Milnes had been elected, in July 1837, conservative member of Parliament for Pontefract. His maiden speech was a success, but far removed from the triumph his 'single-speech' father had won by his famous defence of Canning's administration. Milnes, indeed, never made the mark he had hoped for in the House. He had already removed to bachelor quarters in Pall Mall, where he entertained largely; but Darley did not often attend his breakfasts, if we may judge by these notes.

(To R. M. Milnes Esq. M.P.)

Clarence Club

[No date.]

My dear Milnes

[March 2, 1838?]

Today (March 2) I find a note from you, which has lain here perhaps some time—it has no date nor address, but suppose you at Pall Mall as before.

You know the *day-mare* that haunts me about visiting—especially those I conceive too importantly engaged to have time for my hesitating & confused conversation. To Pusey I have been absolutely *rude*, by way of sparing him the trouble of such an acquaintance. You know how I honour Bunsen—Could you make any excuse to him for me conveying this sentiment, yet my inability to evince it in person.

Ever your's

George Darley.

(To R. M. Milnes, Esq)

Cl(arence) Cl(ub). Tues
[March — 1838?]

My dear Milnes,

Heart fails me—I cannot go to you This impediment makes me wretchedly pusillanimous. Say what you can for me like a dear brother-poet to M. Bunsen—but why should I renew an acquaintance which I cannot keep up? 'Twould involve me in what I have determined to avoid—society for which I am too *gauche* were I ever so glib, and too *proud* likewise with all my humbleness. 'Things move violently towards their place & quietly in it' (Bacon)—or as the philosophic poet said long before the poetic philos^r

Thus everie thinge by his resón,
Hath his owne propir mancion,
To which he seeketh to repaire.

House of Fame.

No, give yourself no further trouble about me but leave the glow-worm in his shade where he is fittest to shine.

Ever your's

George Darley.

(To R. M. Milnes Esq. M P.)

[No address]
April 16 [1838] ¹

My dear friend,

Thank you for your volume. My mind does not take up manuscript well, nor indeed anything, unless alone—so I was glad to have your poems in print & in privacy. They commend the Wordsworthian school of Poetry, an admission of some weight from a stern Elizabethan like me. My favorite however still continues—'The Long Ago'—which I believe you told me was only fit for Lord Morpeth to quote from. So we are fated to be ever in amicable opposition, like the Lion & the Unicorn,

* The volume referred to was probably *Poems of Many Years*, one of two books published by Milnes early in 1838 which contains *The Long-Ago*, written in 1834. Milnes in a note to the book says 'In the following pages the author has indulged in some slight deviations from the orthography that happens to be in common usage at this moment of our literature' Such spellings as *watcht*, *askt*, and *came'st* perhaps follow the example of Julius Hare.

tho' supporters of the same main thing. All your book pleases me but the *supra*-punctuation, which seems to mark your verse as written for those who want ear, whilst it ought to be, & is, for those alone who do not. Does anyone now except a Teacher of Elocution or the Mistress of a London Seminary read the lines—

There scattered oft, the earliest of the year,
By hands unseen, are *showrs* of violets found?

But perhaps it was well to leave this point for critics to nibble at, as there is nothing material for us to fall foul of.

Your's, fraternally,
George Darley.

If we may interpret literally a remark made by Darley when reviewing Bulwer's *The Lady of Lyons* with three other plays, it is probable that he was now writing some of the weekly dramatic notices in the *Athenæum*.¹ These are, however, always too short to be of much account. He ascribes Bulwer's failure in the drama to the fact that 'its immense requisitions swallow up his powers, and leave him upon the surface—feebleness itself'. A play that should have caught his attention, R. H. Horne's *The Death of Marlowe*, he dismisses in a line. The review, with another on Talfourd's *The Athenian Captive* that followed, is mainly a restatement of ideas already expressed. He does, however, recognize that Talfourd's new tragedy shows a gain in dramatic power. Much more important is his onslaught, already referred to, on Hazlitt's principles as art critic.

Early in the summer, so far as we can judge, he set out on another voyage of artistic exploration, this time to Dresden, and recorded his impressions in five letters to the *Athenæum*, the first of which was printed in November. It is curious that a man to whom travel was a burden should not have gone on to Dresden in the preceding autumn, after his visit to Berlin. It is possible, though unlikely, that he did arrange matters thus and held over his material. All that is certain is that he was at Dresden in the summer months, and presumably they were those of 1838. He has left a picturesque description of part of his journey thither.

'We talk of the "lang Scots miles", but what are they to the German? especially the Saxon, and more especially those at the fag-end of a long, uninteresting, midsummer route, with a sun almost strong enough to

¹ 'In our notice of the Theatres, we said almost all that was needful about "The Lady of Lyons", praising it as a very effective and attractive *Melo-drama*, refusing it any higher title.'

blister your coach-panels, and clouds of dust as suffocating as Simooms? Prussia always suggests to me the notion of a reclaimed sea-bed, being little more undulating or fertile—I could even imagine the Baltic had deserted a tract that did not afford marine herbage and cover sufficient for its fishes. It would seem, at least, as if the earlier potentates had taken all of North Europe worth possession, and left the refuse to form the kingdom of *Prussia Proper*. Such was its general character to one who is no geologist, but simply does not put up his eyes like spectacles, while he is travelling. I have left Prussia, however, in perfect admiration at three things—its police, its posting, and its magpies. How so many of these social and gluttonous birds should exist in a country where a human face is a phenomenon, and where the depths of dry sand hardly turn up a well-grown worm or superfluous grain, might puzzle the philosopher of Selborne to conceive. There are here also multitudes of the crow, named with us Royston, or more expressively, from being mottled brown between the shoulders, *Saddleback*, the colour is in strange natural unison with the arid tone of the soil, and to a poetic mind augments the wildness of its character. If one could venture the solecism, a hot bleakness might describe the summer complexion of Prussian scenery, as well as terms less illogical. From Potsdam forth the only flourishing vegetation is rush-grass, which grows tall enough to hide Gulliver: a thin green scurf has begun to gather on some knolls here and there, but still that flower of sterility, the thistle, luxuriates. Even the pine forests themselves seem tacked to the ground through so mere a baize of verdure, everywhere broken and showing the pallid sands beneath, that only for their closeness a zephyr would upset them. Sands! sands! glistening, gray, interminable sands!—as if nature's face were silvered over with a leprosy. All this, besides desolate, sun-dried, blast-swept towns, and villages in which human creatures are rather stabled than housed, keeps the spirits at such low ebb, that the flesh wastes sympathetically. You will smile when I tell you what alone served to cheer me—Izaak Walton or Gilbert White could understand it—innumerable *ground-larks*, which trot about the roads here, animating them, as lizards do in Italy, with their jet-bright eyes and vivacious movements, for they run as fast as little ostriches. I believe it is true, that we may find society in the blankest solitude; and shall, at all events, feel ever grateful to those elegant apologies for sparrows, who enlivened the dreariest part of my route by their gaiety without noise, and familiarity without pertness. At length *Wittenberg* came in sight,—Shakespeare's Wittenberg . . . an old faded town on the right bank of the Elbe; . . . It is no longer a University—except of dust and dulness. . . . Yet we had a more hospitable dinner than usual in North Germany, where a kind of perpetual half-Lent seems to be kept, judging from the road-side houses of reception. Our host had been a great man's butler, which he proved by his choice wines and promptitude to release their corks with or without notice. The Prussians

are a very demure, sombre people, they have cast-iron heads, and features that even at full play fall into angles like so many plans of fortifications, yet here was a phiz to which Grimaldi's versatile countenance would have been a fossil. Imagine a face of caoutchouc, lit up with laughing gas, and twisting itself into fifty different masks per minute—I can remember Joe Munden's power of grimace—and Philpot Curran's, which was still more stupendous—but the Wittenberger's, like everything German, struck me as quite transcendental. I have thought it worth particular commemoration, too, as the *one* jolly visage I observed within the Prussian dominions. To the philosopher this will not be without its moment'

The bronze statue of Luther, standing under a Gothic canopy of iron in front of the dilapidated Town Hall, did not please him.

'The divine spirit of genius within the statue will scarce render it immortal: clumsy and characteristic, it expresses the massive vulgarity of Luther's mind well, but destroys all reverence for the original, and makes affection ridiculous if Protestant art keeps to this unamiable style in representing sanctified personages, image-worship is impossible, and the Virgin herself might be admitted into our churches without fear of producing one idolater. Yet Schadow's name ranks high among German sculptors.'

Despite his host, and the Cranach altar-piece in the town church, he took joyful adieu of Wittenberg 'Such a desert looks the place you expect wild cats at the chimney corners, and foxes peeping like lap-dogs out of the windows. Indeed, the whole tour of Prussia might be ordained as a penance.' A change in prosperity came with entrance into Saxony, though Dresden itself was a disappointment.

'Immediately on entering the Saxon frontier vegetation thickens, firs give place to noble forest trees, hills swell, vallies wind, and streams refresh the soil. I do not mean to ascribe this difference to Saxony being by comparison a free state, but a politician may see something in it. The genius of improvements, however, has little taste for a town residence here now-a-days, Dresden seems to have declined much since the age of its absolute kings, whilst Berlin grows more and more handsome yearly under hers: a kindred result, your politician will perhaps affirm, of the same cause, as under despotism capitals always flourish. I know nothing about the matter—but this I know, that Dresden is no more the miracle of beauty and splendour it has been imagined than El Dorado. We have had golden accounts of both, which were in my mind better called brazen. . . . Travellers are apt to burnish every tea-kettle of a town into a shining city, yet how they could contrive to metamorphose this livid little metropolis into the lustre of all Germany, surpasses my comprehension. A "Northern Florence" forsooth! Dresden is as like Florence as a leaden sixpence is like a star of the first magnitude, or Scriblerus's

pot-lid like the shield of Achilles. Florence may be described as a beautiful labyrinth of picturesque architecture,—Dresden distinguishes itself as the single metropolis of Europe without one fine architectural feature. It lies upon a dead flat, and consists of deep, widish, dusky streets, embellished after a mongrel style between antique German and Louis-Quatorze French, wanting the fantastic originality of the former, and the artificial magnificence of the latter .’

He continues to sketch the panorama of the town in unflattering terms. Lodgings, it is true, were cheap and the people civil. There was an admirable orchestra at the Opera House. But the wine and the water were bad, and he found the town, emptied by the summer, signally dull, though it had some reputation as an intellectual centre because certain writers and artists, such as Tieck and Vogel, lived there. More disappointing still was the picture gallery, the pride of Dresden. Darley holds it to be inferior to both the Florence collections, and to those of Munich, Paris, and Berlin. As a heretic who disputes the ‘divine excellence’ of Correggio’s pictures—a scepticism which he predicts will at last become orthodoxy—he considers that even the Venice collection rivals it. In his opinion it contains only seven first-rate works, the Sistine *Madonna*, five Correggios (one, the *Magdalen*, now generally regarded as a copy of a lost work by that artist), and Titian’s *Cristo della Moneta*. Of these he gives a detailed description, commenting on the woeful state to which they have been reduced by quack restorers. Then he proceeds to a tour of the gallery, a dark building ill-suited to its purpose, in which much rubbish reposes. Such things as fifty-seven Wouwermans and thirty-two Velvet Breughels make it, he remarks, either a treasure-house or a lumber-room according to the taste of the visitor. It is overstocked with examples of Dou, Caravaggio, Guercino—of the laborious Dutch and squalid Italian schools. ‘Among the Albanos, Giordanos, Fetis, Marattis . . . you stand like a disastered swain, not knowing where to rest your eye.’ There are ‘entire chambers adorned by huge mud-and-whitewash doings of the Carracci and Carraceshi, by compositions of insipid Eclectics, and imitations of imitators of third-rate masters! At present that the antique painters such as Memling, Van Eyck, Fra Beato, and Francia, have regained the station to which their exquisite feeling, and spiritual finish and beauty entitle them, I apprehend this gallery begins to sink in connoisseur esteem.’ To these last and their like, rather than to the third-rate Rubenses

and the dozens of dead reputations, the Mengses, the Dietrichs, the Angelica Kauffmanns, he devotes himself, chanting a little hymn of praise in front of a small *Adoration of the Magi* by Francesco Francia. The sculpture gallery he finds chiefly remarkable for the number of barbarous restorations; the collection of engravings rouses his enthusiasm 'On the whole, I do not know any collection of the kind better adapted to turn an idler into a student, or a student into a connoisseur, both from its riches and arrangements, with the constant power of reference to a living dictionary of the Art—M. Frenzel (the curator)' At Meissen he was more impressed by the castle in which the porcelain was made than by the process itself. A Cranach altar-piece delighted him by its colouring and powerful drawing. The only modern works he mentions are certain frescoes by Professor Vogel in the Royal Villa at Pillnitz. He praises their thought and poetry, but deplures their harsh colouring.

When the letters from Dresden came to an end his work as reviewer was resumed. An appreciation of Flaxman by him, containing bitter reflections on England's neglect of her only sculptor, had, indeed, been interpolated among the letters. Bulwer's *Ruchelheu*, produced in March 1839, was the last play that he reviewed. On this occasion, in despair, he changed his ground. Since the age cannot rise to legitimate drama, let it have the amusement peculiar to itself. The popular taste is for melodrama, Picturesque Drama, and some one must do for this what Scott did for the novel and Taglioni for the ballet—make it excellent and admirable after its kind. Bulwer, a popular, fervent, and facile writer, who yet does not lout to public opinion, is especially well qualified, he thinks, for the task, and *Ruchelheu* has pretensions beyond Bulwer's earlier plays.

A long letter to his uncle Henry is the precursor of a visit paid by Darley to Ireland later in the year. It is, as usual, despondent in tone, and besides a reference to his father, contains an interesting analysis of the Irish situation.

(To Henry Darley, Esq

Roebuck

Care of Mess^{rs} Guinness,

5 Kildare Street, Dublin.)

London, 27 Upper Eaton Street, Pimlico.

My dear Uncle

30 March—39.

I am almost as bad a correspondent as yourself, and find it easier to write a book than a letter. But Charles tells me you sometimes speak of

the *absentee* in England, when talking about days gone past—so I would fain make an effort to preserve myself still longer in remembrance. The thoughts of earlier scenes & events & friends are amongst my own most frequent ruminations—and seem to keep their place against all later ones, as the more legitimate possessors. When the cup is full it can hold nothing besides—and so the memory perhaps may retain its first impressions until numerous enough to brim over, while the last-comers are thrown off at once. Your favorite poet, Burns, will explain how impressions become deeper every year—but neither his simile nor mine tells why they should be at the same time sadder to dwell upon yet pleasanter. No doubt distance alone throws an air of interest around objects very ordinary when near, and my being far away perhaps recommends me to favor as one of the ‘departed’. I am not conscious of any better claims on your recollection.

So you have quitted old occupations & quarters? Removed to aristocratical Roebuck!—even from the beautiful little garden corner at Bray, within sight of those wild, purple hills which you pointed out to me as making part of the ‘concern’ (at least of its ornaments), and which I certainly thought more attractive than the mountains of brickwork you raised to set off against them. Are you building any new *Pyramids* to immortalize your name & that of Roebuck? I picture you to myself as of yore amongst an army of masons, bricklayers, carpenters, hod-men, etc., numerous enough to build the Chinese Wall, adding stack to stack & story to story. You persevere at all events in other unthrifty habits, I am told—keeping open house of a Sunday, besides snug places in the chimney-nook all the week for stray parsons & like social bodies. There is no more regrettable circumstance about my cancer of the heart—my impediment—than that it keeps me still, as it kept & must keep me always—a *solitudinarian*. I can only enjoy society as a picture drawn on my mind—the thing itself is to me a punishment—so I must be content with seeing it, as Sancho did his mistress Dulcinea, ‘by hearsay’.

How are all my Springfield companionesses? those who made up for me between them a little *mind* from scraps off their own—who gave me my love of books (sole consolation to me now!), and my love of rhyming, for which *I* thank them tho’ the world does not. Fanny^x it seems is, as she always was, the only absolute philosopher, besides myself, of the Springfield generation—She has preferred ‘single blessedness’ to the chance of double—so very rare. I should rejoice to have a letter from her, as none may be expected from you—it would refresh like a draught from the *Shrubbery* well in this wilderness of brickdust, which the Dead Sea I think supplies with brackish pipewater. Sheer incompetence to play the agreeable correspondent has alone hindered me writing to my earliest friends, & thus adding another thread to the tie which separation draws too thin: who can tell but Ireland may be my grave as it was my

^x An aunt of Darley.

cradle, & I should like to have the same wellknown faces bending over the one as the other Do, make Fanny or M—— or S—— (who are within reach) write to me—and as much as they please about old times & fireside matters When a child I thought myself miserable, but now see that by comparison I was happy—at least all the ‘sunshine of the breast’ I now enjoy seems a mere reflection of that in the dawn of life. I have been to ‘la belle France’, & to ‘bella Italia’, yet the brightest sun which ever shone upon me broke over *Ballybetagh* mountains. Barbarian you will call me—only fit to live in a Druid’s cave, & die upon it! Perhaps my prepossessions are fanciful—perhaps Irish rural life grows more attractive as more dimly seen—pandemonium itself may look like paradise at the end of a long vista—Residence in Ireland might soon, therefore, destroy my romance, and indeed my life also, however deliciously rural All this is possible, nay probable, if we are to believe those veracious oracles the newspapers. Beyond doubt crime & misery flourish amongst you as though the dews of heaven nourished the crop—so far there is convincing proof. Can you tell me, can aught save Providence itself foresee, what shall become of our unfortunate country? Murders it would appear are considered a pastime—man-shooting counts with snipe-shooting as one of your field sports, & only differs in no game-licence being thought necessary for it—Lords are popped at like simple land-agents from behind a hedge, as if they were both birds of a feather—cottagers have their heads wrung off by dozens in their very nests like sparrows, or as if the old ogre-fashion of making men into minced pies were revived in Ireland, human bodies are hacked till no longer divisible. Where is all this to end, or how? Things are not come to this pass among us—we indeed commit a reasonable share of murders, but not upon *nobility & gentry*—merely on peddlars, cumbersome wives or surplus children. And then we don’t murder like you for nothing, but for—ninepence & a brass thimble! Besides all which your murderers belong only to the lowest class, while we can count some very respectable names among the profession. T’other day a Sir Somebody Something (I forget who) was tried, not as a suborner of cutthroats as in good old times, but actual assassin himself—having attempted to behead his foe at a ball with a supper-knife! Here again we find the heir of £7000 a year killing his fellow-student à l’*italien* with a spring blade! These examples prove a taste for murder vastly more genteel than among you, & coming almost under the head of an accomplishment or finish to the education of a gentleman. In sober seriousness—a commercial country must always be to a high pitch criminal—the frequent sight of wealth, the value set on it, the demoralization by its means, necessarily occasion much crime: but this is an evil only, as shadow to sunlight, attendant upon good. At least we may hope so. What eventual good promises to weigh against crime in Ireland? What present good palliates it? Your bankrupts’ list is I believe not much lighter than your Calendar—your prosperity alone

hangs back, while your evil-doing progresses Who will pour capital into a country where rents are fixed rather by the tenant than the landlord, & are paid with bullet-lead as often as coin of the realm? But even this state of things might be borne, if any *end* to it were visible or conjecturable, except utter perdition—mutual destruction by the parties themselves—for nothing I apprehend will effect tranquillity between Papists & Protestants short of that which produced the well-known quietus in the sawpit. Politicians ascribe the origin of all these evils to English misgovernment—& perhaps with justice—we sowed the wind, & we are reaping a whirlwind enough to blast the whole kingdom What you need most, seems to me a weighty *middle-class* spread thro' the population—a class of retired tradesmen, wealthy manufacturers & farmers, *small gentlemen-at-large*, &c.—who swarm over the face of England, & hold the lower order in check by their immediate connexion with it, their habits of steadiness, degree of enlightenment, power of purse, or respectable appearance, all exercising a secret control if not open restraint. But how is such a middle class to be created in Ireland, you will ask I don't know—I only know how it was crushed—by the *Union* This degraded your peers into titled squires, cut down your M P s to one third their number, & after thus diminishing the weight of your upper class, drove almost all who possessed the means of flight out of their desolate country But it did more, & did worse. It prevented the growth of that very middle class now so much needed, & which the trade, &c., derivable from a resident court, resident noblesse & rich gentry, would have encreased along with the encreasing population. What is Ireland now but a mob-ocracy? Her upper class annihilated, her middle class poor & small & feeble compared with her lower—she seems to me at present an essentially democrat nation, & promising to become more so day by day. Ireland has peradventure, for aught I know, progressed more under the Union than she could have done without it. but into what hands has the advantage fallen?—into those of an additional four million pauper-tenants, whose average farming-stock is a pig, & whose 'improvements' consist in a new roof to the common sty. Would *Repeal* then save Ireland? For my own part I do not see what can do so now, short of a second Incarnation—Divine Wisdom itself must descend in person to accomplish a work past all Human

Are your projected railways to produce any good?—or merely to facilitate radical meetings, & smoothe the road to eventual republicanism? Indeed, if they only made you a little richer & richer, your state were not quite hopeless. But I fear railways & systems of Instruction will prove equally abortive—or perchance fulfil their benevolent aims of redeeming Ireland from her evils about the time of the Last Conflagration Apropos: will the railways serve or disserve *your* interests?

Do you go abroad this summer?—Perhaps like me you love the idea,

but dread the experiment I am the wretchedest of all travellers—sick & sour the whole route whether land or sea—unable almost to ask my way, as miserable a pilgrim as ever plodded with ‘peas in his shoes’. Having now visited France, Italy, & Germany,—I shall scarce make a long journey again, till that to my last home—beyond the irrepassable bourne. At least such is my wish. Infirmary makes me older than I am—& of a truth, this life is to me in a great measure already past. You are younger than I in feeling & health. Yet perhaps you too begin to think the Grand Tour a huge roundabout to one’s grave I am certain you only deem the effort a trifle whilst it is unmade. But should you indeed be tempted abroad, don’t overlook London as you pass by.

My Father you are aware was here last autumn—I hobbled after him as well as I could to shew him the sights, but c^d not at all keep pace with his spirits—he had arrived the day before from Paris, & set off after dinner for Ireland! Verily the human race is degenerating Such a voyage would have shaken *my* crazy frame into its component dust. Should business call me to Paris next year, I propose dividing the journey into *five* parts—Dover, Boulogne, Amiens, Beauvais, Paris, at each of the first four stopping a day & night. If *you* be as young as your eldest Brother, I see no reason why you sh^d not travel to Constantinople. So with some hopes & many wishes that you may soon visit London, I conclude this longest of letters. Do not neglect my request to be sent one in return—if from yourself, the better, if not, from your Home-Secretary whoever she is. Kindest remembrances & regards to all friends round your fireside. Ever your affectionate nephew,

George Darley.

P.S. You must consider these hieroglyphics wonderfully plain writing for me—quite a compliment!

A note to Milnes announces his departure to those places that were most firmly woven into his affections.

(To R. M. Milnes, Esq.,)

Parthenon Club.

Friday [Early summer 1839] ¹

Dear Milnes,

Many thanks for your invitation, but I cannot meet your party of Quietists, being just on my flight to Ireland. Few such people there! I should like to meet some

Regretting we have not exchanged a kind word this year, except by pen,

Ever your’s

George Darley.

In Ireland he not only renewed his acquaintance with old scenes and familiar faces but also made the three new friends

¹ This note might belong to 1844, but less probably.

who were to be the consolation of his later years. They were the granddaughters of his uncle Henry, 'their names Mary Jane, Laura, and Henrietta, and their ages at this time about twenty-one, seventeen, and fifteen. Their father was a well-known Dublin physician. In their youthful beauty and fresh charm, their devotion to one another, and their affection for music and poetry, he found that touch of romance which had hitherto eluded him. They had exceptional gifts of mind and person, and he delighted to be their adviser and companion. They won his heart and he had no small place in theirs.

One article that he contributed to the *Athenæum* in this year, 'The Regeneration of our National Poetry', deserves more than passing mention. It is an analysis of the causes that led up to the Romantic Revival, with a reasoned appreciation, fuller than any attempted till then, of what had been contributed by various writers towards the change in poetical taste. As a critical document it is thus of considerable importance, for it antedates de Quincey's philosophic essay *Style*, and contains much more detailed information than Wordsworth's supplementary *Essay* of 1815, which, indeed, is directed towards another object.¹

During his holiday in Ireland and for the rest of 1839 Darley was busy with a work that he must long have pondered, a dramatic chronicle, *Thomas à Becket*, published by Moxon early in 1840. Miss Mitford had, when writing of *Nepenthe*, advised him to undertake a subject that should blend the imaginative and the real. His own bias was towards the drama, in which he had once passionately hoped to succeed. Perhaps these two things together explain his choice of theme, but they do not explain why he chose that most ungrateful of all forms, the closet drama. Since so much depended for him on the success of this work it is certain that it was a matter of anxiety and not lightly attempted. He was now well over forty, in poor health, and desperately hungry for recognition. He had always wanted to write a play. Why, then, did he now work with no regard to the limits of the stage? It would have been a great triumph for John Lacy and the dramatic reviewer of the *Athenæum* if he had confounded friends and dramatists by a good and actable play.

He says, in his interesting preface to *Thomas à Becket*, what he

¹ It is, perhaps, well to mention that Hazlitt's *Lectures on the English Poets* were published in May 1818, and that Macaulay's review of Moore's *Life of Byron* belongs to June 1830.

had said many times before, that the age was completely unsuited to what he calls legitimate acting drama, and therefore he has wasted no time upon attempts to fit his chronicle to the stage. Yet he is fully conscious of the stage-effectiveness of Becket, Henry, Eleanor, and Rosamond, and recommends them and their attractive times to his brother authors.¹ It is curious that he should not have recognized the danger of his compromise by avoiding completely a form making demands that he could only satisfy in part. Distrust in his own powers, when they were confined by restraints, no doubt had much to do with his limited aim. The pity is that there seems to be no reason why the work should not have undergone a stage discipline. But it must be remembered that like Beddoes, though to a lesser degree, he gained something by his adoption of a dramatic form, an outlet to one side of his personality. Part of his defence is contained in the following paragraph from the preface

'Perhaps every species of literature, wherein persons come under view, is the better for being, as far as it may be, dramatic. history, epic poetry, ballad, novel, become more vivid and truth-like, by the adoption of dramatic form and spirit: Plato in this way dramatises his philosophy, Socrates his morality, Dante his religious poem. It will therefore seem natural enough that a dramatic intention should evince itself throughout a Dramatic Chronicle: there is little fear of any dramatist now-a-days, whether he write for the stage or no, writing *too* dramatically. In accordance with this belief, I have seldom made my characters what the metaphysicians call *subjective*, but on the contrary made them agents of the first person, themselves doing and suffering, where possible, that which they are supposed to have done and suffered. Let me signalise the opposite practice as most antidramatic, yet as one much too frequent and always fatal among writers for the stage. Subjective composition is however the natural tendency of our refined age, and on this postulate founds itself an argument I fear convincing against the probable regeneration of Acting Drama. Can we restrain that tendency? or *should* we, if we could? Though fatal to the drama, it may be vital to something else as desirable.'

That is both naive and acute. When he could see so clearly for a little way it is strange that he was blind to what might be beyond.

That sensitive critic Mr. Arthur Symonds is inclined to think

¹ Leigh Hunt, in 1835, was convinced that Henry the Second would make 'a glorious drama', and he gives an unpromising bald sketch of how he would attack the subject. See *The Correspondence of Leigh Hunt* (1862), vol. 1, p. 252.

Darley put his best and most living work into this play and its successor. We cannot subscribe to his verdict. There is much to be said for *Thomas à Becket*. It is an honest and sustained example of its kind. Its merits can be realized in part by reading it after encountering the mediocrities of Tennyson's *Becket*, which owes more than a little to the earlier play, without benefiting from it. Darley attempts to work out many of his dramatic theories, and with some success. The subject was momentous, national, and fit for tragedy. There is a fierce energy in the writing, and, generally, a quick cut and thrust in dialogue, which together prevent the play from becoming dull. He was careful to subordinate poetry to action, and to use, as far as he was able, the language of natural speech. Evidently he had been at great pains to study the period. Yet the brave attempt was foredoomed.

He would have had a better chance of success if he had taken a lesson from Scott and moved his leading historical figures to the background. As it is they are not re-created beings. Becket perhaps at moments breathes, but through Darley, not in his own right. He is too much a study in history-book generalities. Darley did not see him alive, or make him his own property. When he has been made archbishop, Becket communes with himself in this fashion:

Am I indeed the son of Gilbert Becket?—
How my soul swells!—like his who pinnaced
On some high-pitch'd, realm-skirted promontory,
Takes in the immensities around, beneath,
Skies, seas, and continents, with rapturous gaze!
How mine eye kindles! How my spirit burns
Like yon great sun, brighter as it moves higher!—
My very frame seems grown gigantic!
I feel as I could overstride the earth—
Yea, grasp heaven's ruling orbs in my two hands!
Thou purer air that maketh the mountain-pine
Shoot up till he befits his lofty station,
Why shouldst thou not descend in nourishing dews
To make high-natured men pre-eminent
Of form as mind?—Becket, thou'rt in the clouds;
Sublimity makes thy brain swim—thou'rt not fit for it!
He's only great who can despise his greatness.
Be not the night-fly drawn into the flame
By thy blind love of splendour, and there burnt!
True Magnanimity hath no outward measure,

Nor is reveal'd by that. Is not the emmet
 Sagacious as the elephant? To our minds
 Alone, we may—by custom of great thoughts,
 By venturous deeds and versancy with power,
 Ambrosial food of books, august discourse,
 By ever straining towards some height from which
 Our former selves look little—to our minds
 We may add stature, cubit upon cubit,
 Until in them we become Anakim,
 Nobler than earth e'er form'd' . . .

Such blank verse is competent and untortured, without being distinguished. Over its author hovered troublesome Elizabethan ghosts. As a study of ambition the psychology of Becket is almost vulgar in its lack of subtlety. The character of Henry, who is pictured as a rash but high-souled lawgiver, is likewise clumsily conceived. As a lover he is a pitiable failure. Eleanor merely stands for crafty jealousy. Darley, with the false delicacy of his age, attempts to whitewash Rosamond, and reveal her as an innocent creature who might vie with Barry Cornwall's melting beauties. Tennyson afterwards fell heavily into the same pit. It follows from these things that the chronicle wants atmosphere. What there is of local colour is strained after, especially in the utterances of Walter Mapes and John of Salisbury. One of the happiest touches, because most natural, is the introduction of the young lion cub Richard. Despite the gusto of the writing and the determination of the author to let his characters work out their own doom, the quarrel between Becket and Henry becomes a struggle between abstract and arbitrary forces, manipulated externally to an end by no means inevitable. The construction of the chronicle is, as it were, left to itself; there are sixteen changes of scene in the last act.

If that were all there would not be much to praise in *Thomas à Becket* save its vigour and solidity. Fortunately Darley sometimes let his fancy wander away from history, and in Dwerga, Eleanor's dwarf and familiar, he almost created a medieval grotesque. She is good enough to make us regret that he did not indulge this vein more often and to the full.

What, am I not thy grand-child? thou that bought'st me
 Of my Norse dam, when scarce the size of a crab,
 And fed'st me to my present stature with
 Dainties of all kinds—cocks' eggs, and young frogs

So freshly caught they whistled as they singed,
 Like moist wood, on the spit, still bubbling out
 Dew from their liquid ribs, to baste themselves,
 As they turn'd slowly!—then rich snails that slip
 My throttle down ere I well savour them,
 Most luscious mummy, bat's-milk cheese, at times
 The sweetbreads of fall'n mooncalves, or the jellies
 Scumm'd after shipwreck floating to the shore.
 Have I not eat live mandrakes, screaming torn
 From their warm churchyard-bed, out of thy hand?
 With other roots and fruits cull'd ere their season,—
 The yew's green berries, nightshade's livid bugles,
 That poison human chits but nourish me,—
 False mushrooms, toadstools, oak-warts, hemlock chopt?

Doubtless these lines have Elizabethan godfathers. They do not quite hit the mark. But such bravura passages are not the whole of Dwerga. This romantic sprite of evil does take on a fitful life of her own, savouring more of the macabre Beddoes than of Darley. Her relations with the jealous queen are admirably suggested. The scenes in which she is shown as the warden of Eleanor's maids, an imp of mischief in the conjurer's cell, and the discoverer of Rosamond's labyrinth, are vivid and powerful. They are the dramatic Darley at his best. It is evident that he wrote them, as he says, 'with delight, ardour, and ease'. To his contemporaries, however, Dwerga was an ugly blot for which they had no relish. Miss Mitford, otherwise an admirer of the play, found her so 'absolutely nasty' that she would have been 'glad to lift her out of the tragedy with a pair of tongs'.

Darley expected no general appreciation of *Thomas à Becket*. It was meant for the chosen few. The mixed nature of its reception and the anxiety with which he awaited those judgements he trusted can be gauged from the following letters to Milnes and Procter.¹

¹ I am indebted to Mr Frederick Page, who finds more virtue in both *Becket* and *Ethelstan* than I do, for the following note on the former.

How curiously non-climacteric is this *Thomas à Becket*. Becket murdered almost incidentally, and all the Nemesis left for the future, unrepresented. And what meaning is implicit in the whole drama? Is it the essential (and rebellious when ignored) equality of man which coexists with all the mere form of graduations of servitude, of subordination? No man can be only and wholly a servant to another. In the last analysis he, too, is a self-sufficient man, responsible only to God. Thus Becket asserts himself against the king; Dwerga against Eleanor, John of Salisbury against Becket, the Maids of Honour, the stablemen, the Smith, the Ostler, all pay themselves with satire

(To R. M. Milnes, Esq.) •

[March? 1840.]

My dear Milnes

I can easily imagine your goodnatured motive for not letting me know your opinion about 'Thomas à Becket'—videlicet that silence was less disagreeable than condemnation. This being understood, add to your kindness & tell me candidly whether the drama is in your opinion so very bad as to make the presentation of it the reverse of a compliment. I ask this because it was my wish to send Lord Northampton a copy, the best & sole means in my power of returning his kindness towards me. My fears have alone prevented me doing so long before. I would not think of it now, but that the opinions of several friends are just as favorable to the work, as those of others must be (I apprehend, else they would not, like you, remain silent) the contrary.

An early answer will much oblige

Your's with regard

George Darley.

27 Up Eaton St. or Clarence Club

P S Do not think it requisite to be tender-spoken with one never so himself

(To R. M. Milnes, Esq.)

Cl(arence) Cl(ub).

Sat^y

[March? 1840.]

My dear Milnes

Thank you for the loan of the *Brochure* which I leave—& much more for the letter you sent to Wilson, which I have but just heard of. A few such kind friends somewhat earlier in life, would have made it worth spending. I suppose it was you spoke to Rogers about Becket—he never noticed me before, tho' he patronized every other rhymers in England

Yours ever

George Darley.

(To B. W. Procter.)

Clar(ence) Club, Wednesday, 6 o'clock.

[March? 1840.]

Dear Mr. Commissioner,

Confound your prose lunatics who leave you no time for inquiring upon poetic ones! Or have you really looked over 'Becket', and taken this tender way of telling me you don't like it?

If you have *not* read it, for God's sake do, and let me know in one

or revenge on their employers. And so far as the conspirators have given themselves entirely to the King they are as 'nought' as Lepidus. Is it, then, subordination to a principle not to a person that is 'taught' least of all if the person is one's self, as it is for Darley's Becket?

word what you think of it I don't want an essay, or good-natured reserve, neither; but the single bold word 'good' or 'bad'—anything except 'indifferent'.

If my drama cannot prove attractive to selecter judgments, what hope have I from the pig-headed public?

Never a word more will I write, should 'Becket' fail, except for periodicals and mutton chops

When you can speak out on the subject, I'll eat and drink with you. Not till then!

Ever yours, poet or not,
Thomas à Becket Darley.

(To B W. Procter.)

[March? 1840]

My dear Barry Cornwall,

I am indeed suspicious, not of you, but myself, most sceptical about my right to be called 'poet', and therefore it is I desire confirmation of it from others. Why have a score of years not established my title with the world? Why did not 'Sylvia', with all its faults, ten years since? It ranked me among the *small* poets. I had as soon be ranked among the piping bullfinches

Poets are the greatest or most despicable of intellectual creatures. What with ill-health, indolence, diffidence in my powers, and indifference (now) to fame, I feel often tempted to go and plant cabbages, instead of sowing laurel seeds that never come up. Verily I court the mob's applause, and care about its censure, as much as Coriolanus did, but unless selected judgments are edified, where 's the use of writing for the All-seer's perusal and my own?

Glad 'Becket' pleases you so far, but dissatisfied (with myself, mind!) that it has only induced you to skim it. For Heaven's sake, unless it *force* you to read it thoroughly, cram it into the blazes! No poetic work that does less is worth a fig skin.

Many persons, as well as you, dislike Dwerger, to me it seems, of course, the highest creation in the work. I wrote it with delight, ardour, and ease; how therefore can it well be over-wrought? Which would imply artifice and elaboration. I *think* you'll like it better some time hence. T Carlyle wrote me a characteristic letter, compares 'Becket' to Gotz von Berlichingen! and predicts vitality. Miss Mitford pronounces me Decker, Marlowe, and Heywood rolled into one! Others too are favourable, but see what *my* great friend the editor of the 'Athenæum' has done for me.

A *whole* column of criticism, the censorer cutting the throat of the encomiast all through it! Have I served so long a poetical 'prenticeship to be fubbed off after this fashion?

As to meeting you, fix your own evening, all are alike to me who have no engagements, and cannot be so to you who have many.

About what hour do you generally leave Gray's Inn for St. John's Wood? let me know that.

Sorry to hear of your annoyances; but what is human life except a chaos of cares?

Ever yours,

Cl(arence) Club. Wednesday.

George Darley.

The critic of the *Athenæum*, while noticing a great advance on *Sylvia* in simplicity of style and regretting that the play was not written for the stage, found occasion to censure those episodes where the poet's fancy 'creates beings so eccentric in their uncouthness as to weary the sympathy of those most willing to be led out of the paths of common life and nature'. To scenes of a like nature in *Sylvia*, 'the Satyr's hairy face . . . peering in discordantly', he ascribes the comparative failure of that poem. The *Monthly Chronicle* was a little more kind. Darley evidently felt that he had received sufficient encouragement to proceed. The rest of the year he devoted to a second chronicle, *Ethelstan*, and to a piece of work that came to him unexpectedly, an introduction to the edition of Beaumont and Fletcher published by Moxon in his series of reprints from the older dramatists. This last was a task that he reluctantly undertook in place of the failing veteran Southey. It found him unprovided in materials 'save those which casual reflection and the most superficial research had brought together'.

With the text of the plays Darley had nothing to do. It was merely a reprint of Weber's edition of 1812, which he was convinced was 'corrupt to no common degree'. He was altogether dissatisfied with the little he could add to the lives of the two dramatists, and the introduction bears evident marks of haste.¹ It is, nevertheless, a praiseworthy effort in criticism. He holds that Beaumont and Fletcher are inferior to Ben Jonson in comedy and to Webster and Ford in tragedy. Their chief success is in 'a certain gentle and almost feminine pathos', but where Shakespeare paints love like Raffael or Perugino, they resemble Guido. He notices their keen sense of the theatre, adding that while Shakespeare catered for the popular taste, Fletcher pandered to it. 'They are insects on the thigh of a great character, unable

¹ The edition was superseded almost at once by that of the learned and indefatigable Rev Alexander Dyce, also published by Moxon (11 vols, 1843-6). Dyce mentions Darley, whom he calls 'a true poet', many times in his introduction, and quotes him as an authority.

to comprehend it wholly. Their *furor poeticus* is apt to become ambitious fustian.' He is perhaps most interesting when writing of their versification.¹ In their practice he finds 'the first remarkable sweetening and softening, united with weakening of our poetic language into its present state', and instances the devices by which the common blank verse line grows with them 'a tail of supernumerary joints', their habit of throwing pauses on uneven syllables, of supplanting one long syllable by several that are short, and making the eleventh syllable of an overrunning verse long and emphatic. This system of versification, graceful and feminine, which makes them rather 'happy modulators than understanding melodists', serves in his opinion as a dangerous model to Leigh Hunt's *Legend of Florence* and other modern work. The two thick volumes, published towards the end of 1840, were well received. Since the frontispiece title is dated 1839 they were overdue.

Darley's correspondence with those Irish cousins whom he had come to know in the preceding year begins at this time with two letters to Laura, now eighteen. It was continued till his death.

(To Miss L. Darley,
7 Kildare Street,
Dublin)

London Clarence Club.
27 Nov. 40.

Dear Fair-Star

I am glad to find by your letter (not to me), that you can remember a friend for a whole year—which from one of your sex is as good as an age from one of our's. It was no great merit in me never to have forgotten you—the merit being all your own. That must be potent india-rubber which will efface from 'the tablets of my brain' your affectionate reception of me at Prospect-House, and your docile attention to the Shakespearean discourses of one so lame in the tongue as I am. Lovers of Shakespeare (& Milton) are sure, without any other merit, to have a share of my heart, which is nevertheless no 'artichoke'—a leaf for every comer. But indeed love for the Bible itself would not make them favorites with me, unless they were like you amiable and noble-minded besides.

Headache as usual says—write no more. Verily it said—write not at

¹ This part of the essay is the subject of interesting criticism and appreciation in R. H. Horne's introduction to *The Poems of Geoffrey Chaucer, Modernised* (by several hands), 1841, pp. lv-lviii and *passim*.

all. But I can seldom (author-like) resist transgressing in that kind, especially when so tempted'

Ever your's, dearest girl,
George Darley.

Shew this by all means to Mary Jane—perhaps it will make her *jealous*, even of an old bachelor And then she may attempt to recover his good graces, as she well knows how.

(To Miss L. Darley)

London, Clarence Club.
Shortest Day (as your exercise in Astronomy)
[1840]

One moment for a few lines to 'dear & fair, my scholar'. Don't cry—Egotist! at my quoting myself—the words are so apt & came to my pen so pat! Indeed it strikes me that the scene between Rosamond & her Pedagogue must have originated from a real one which took place in Ireland not long before 'Becket' was written. You know accident may be called the father of invention, as necessity is the mother.

Well—pray thank Grandpapa for his despotism, in 'commanding' me to his Christmas Dinner—as complimentary as a vice-regal command to do what is for the recipient's own benefit. I can scarce prevail on myself to rebel against the iron rule of his hospitality, extended with such prince-like ambition over *us* even so far away. But it is impossible for me at least to obey the summons—you shall know why First & foremost I am on the very brink of the great gulf which leads so many to perdition—viz: *publication*—a second Dramatic Chronicle, delayed much, much too long by inveterate headache, is just about to run thro' the press,—perchance the sole 'run' it will have Secondly & foremost (as an Irishman may say) by travelling in winter I subject myself to all of death but its relief—a voyage, land or sea, being to my wretched frame, continued rack & torture, were it made in a palanquin & Swan's-down, or Cleopatra's pleasure boat Swallow-like I can only visit you at summer-time, & of a truth it would prove far more enjoyable, when I could daunder like a beadsman about the Shrubbery, & be induced to chatter there by something else than the cold—when also we could take an excursion once more . . . to Springfield, the Dargle, & other unforgettable haunts of my childhood. Lastly & foremost of all, the expense dearest! is too great for my purse now (as usual indeed) lankier than my person: (You need not mention this latter item out of the babyhouse).

No letter yet from Mary Jane—I postponed this intending, had she written, to kill my two birds with one double-barrelled epistle. But the present note is killing enough . . .

Far be it from me to disparage worldly occupations, which must have their due as exercising the practical faculties—one half the man, tho' perhaps the less noble. But it is in our mental shape that we are most

like the divine image, as in our moral we can but little resemble it. You see I am at my lectures still!

Merry Christmas to all friends round Grandpapa's fireside—as merry as good hearts make and should make good cheer

Your's ever, co-heiress of my Springfield affections Excuse this hurried scrawl.

George Darley.

This second chronicle, *Ethelstan, or The Battle of Brunanburh*, published by Moxon at the beginning of 1841, is definitely inferior to *Thomas à Becket* and might well have preceded that play. A certain wild energy flits through it, but early faults are accentuated and virtues hard to seek. Darley, moving in a mist, fails to take advantage of his more remote subject. Ethelstan (in warlike nobility modelled on Alfred), stricken with remorse as his brother's murderer, is the object of a plot led by the dead man's betrothed, whom he loves. To this attempt on his life, and to a general invasion by his enemies, he rises superior in a battle which, with its preliminaries, occupies, not very profitably, two of the five acts. In a sense Ethelstan is more human than Becket. There are some natural touches in his love for his sister Edgitha, and Darley seems to have thought that this added domestic interest would enhance the play's popularity. But the only character of note is the glee-maiden and prophetess Runilda, a fervently romantic creature whose chants, some of them, strike an appropriate note. The best are the song of warning beginning

O'er the wild gannet's bath
Come the Norse coursers! . . .

and her advice to Constantine, King of Scotland.

Gray head! get thee gone thy best gate with thy Gael to the Grampians!
Woe waits thee, deep heart-wounds, as wise as thou art and as warlike!
The blood-drinking barb bends her way to the breast of the bright-hair'd!

The spear speedeth swift on the wind to the wound, her red station!
Each moment, to man the misguided, is mother of mourning!

It was Darley's intention to write a series of dramas dealing with English history on the lines laid down in his two chronicles. This quixotic project, on which his literary hopes seem now to centre, is referred to in the preface to *Ethelstan*, where, with a proud air of resignation and strong in the honesty of his purpose, he fronts those who would bid him stay or pull him down.

'These hands, unskilful as they are, would fain build up a CAIRN, or

rude national monument, on some eminence of our Poetic Mountain, to a few amongst the many Heroes of our race, sleeping even yet with no memorial there, or one hidden beneath the moss of ages *Ethelstan* is the second stone, *Becket* was the first, borne thither by me for this homely pyramid, to rear it may be above my powers, but were it a mere mound of rubbish, it might remain untrampled and unscorned, from the sacredness of its purpose. And thus has remained my work already done, the meditative pilgrim has stopped to applaud my labour, the man of practice has bestowed on it a cold approval, as a profitless romantic project, too much out of the present taste, creditable to my dwarfish strength but demanding a giant's; while the busy world of wayfarers pass it by unseen. "Hope must be the portion of all that resolve on great enterprises" Yet the pursuit alone is pleasure, the completion oftentimes full reward, the mere aspiration towards an exalted object elevates, as with internal wings I have, moreover, been in many cases consoled by the enthusiasm of strangers for the indifference of friends, and should I complain under public neglect those high and honoured supporters might well exclaim—"Ungrateful and undiscerning! to value promiscuous suffrage above our good opinions!" Such opinions are indeed a "portion" realised beyond any promise of Hope, and all power of Fortune half the possible harvest is housed, which should, so far as regards *self*, content an ungrasping cultivator of his poetic field. A more comprehensive and divine ambition would wish to see its efforts generally beneficial, but of this half portion I fear to be still disappointed it waits on genius as large as the ambition.

That is well said, and with dignity. But there is confusion between the judgements invited, one literary, of his performance, the other more restricted, of his intention. Darley towards the end of his life stated his belief that the arts were the mere handmaidens of civilization and the general good, but he was careful to note that these things were no concern of the artist himself. Writing to his kinsman by marriage, Lord Headley, in reply to an appreciation of *Ethelstan*, he says.

'Fame would indeed now come too late, far too late! but if my works would *do good*, fertilizing minds, elevating them, or cherishing the noble passions, the purer, deeper enthusiasms to however small a degree—these were still repayment enough, besides the pleasure of poetic creation—these are my sole objects on the hither side of the grave.'

Praise given on such grounds alone would assuredly never have satisfied the wounded heart that was so intent on gaining the approbation of his fellow writers.

A letter to Lady Morgan, which emphasizes his determination to combat what he conceived to be the poetical taste of the day,

shows that her encouragement may have influenced him to persevere in drama.

Clarence Club,
January 23, 1841

Dear Lady Morgan,¹

I felt very much flattered by your warm praises of *Thomas à Becket*, and the more so, as its rough nature is opposed to the present refined and polished mode of poetry. Most persons prefer a Paris or a Perseus by Canova, to a Knight-Templar on a tombstone, and looking as if he had been sculptured with a pickaxe, not a chisel. But I suppose you have a heart big enough for both styles, a heart on both sides, while most critics have only a sinister one, or none at all. Your suggestion about 'a series of historical dramas', such as *Becket*, encouraged me in that design, & hence *Ethelstan*. I hope not to have presented this subject in all the mere ruggedness and rust of antiquity, yet to have preserved some of its simple relish and raciness. If my recurrence to such olden times be objected, you will say for me, (as your countryman, proud of the name) that King Ethelstan is, to us living now, a far more poetical personage than the Emperor Napoleon, and that history often teaches us nearer the farther it removes, like 'dear home', which is seldom so very dear until it is rather distant. There are a thousand better reasons for loving the antique than the antiquarian one; but you are familiar with them all, and to my distaste for the present style of poetry, I confess myself the bee in the honey-bottle—quite sweet-sick, and although my palate is not altogether assinine and made for thistles, yet it does prefer even the *amarum aliquid* to chewing an eternal cud of rose-leaves.

Dear Lady Morgan, excuse the liberty of this long answer to your notes, but as I am in a worse sense than the weird woman, one of the 'imperfect speakers', it forces me to spend all my tediousness in writing. Sir Charles will perhaps take the trouble of decyphering these hieroglyphical characters for your convenience.

With best respects to him and your ladyship, I remain what all the world is towards you, and to what I need not say besides.

Yours much favored,
George Darley.

Ethelstan was as coldly received as its predecessor. The *Athenæum*, indeed, was more appreciative than before. The critic paid tribute to 'one of the few original minds belonging to a mono-

¹ The vivacious Sydney Owenson, Lady Morgan, of some literary repute in her day, author of tales (Irish and other), bad verses, and books of travel. She supported the application of Charles Darley for the Cork professorship, and at the end of her letter to him from Brighton says, 'Could you lend me your brother's magnificent tragedy of *Thomas à Becket*? I cannot get it here.'

tonous and barren time', but he also remarked that owing to affectations and conceits a noble idea was imperfectly developed. Darley, nevertheless, began a third drama. If it was ever finished it remained unpublished. *Ethelstan* was his last attempt to gain the public ear or wring tribute from his friends. For twenty years he had devoted himself to literature, and with no apparent success. One after another his attempts to open the House of Fame had failed and passed into forgetfulness. He held resolutely on his way, refusing with disdain to be other than he was, not courting popularity, though he hungered and thirsted for praise. It is impossible to refuse homage to a man struggling so magnificently with himself and circumstances. Few poets or men of letters can have undergone so bitter and thankless an ordeal of devotion. It continued till his death, for he worked to the end. Now, at forty-five, the worst was over, since the ache was deadened that before had been torture, and capacity to create was passing naturally from him. In these last years one solace was granted him, that happy communion with young and appreciative minds revealed in a long series of letters to Ireland.

IX. 1841-1846

Last Years. Letters to Ireland.

DARLEY's literary occupations during the remaining years of his life, other than his journalism and occasional contributions to periodicals, will probably never be known. It is significant that the third drama is only once mentioned. The courageous endeavour to achieve personal expression in a form other than the lyric seemed to have failed. Feeble health, the bleak wind of indifference, and his temperament all opposed it. There was little but his own belief in his work to sustain him, and Darley's belief was a feeble reed, often shaken by depression and doubt. His intermittent genius needed the strength that comes from generous encouragement for its full flowering. That was denied him. For some time, perhaps ever since that brave venture of faith, the printing of *Nepenthe*, he had been engaged in a losing fight. His efforts mocked and exhausted him, every year made less his chance of success. It is useless to ask whether, in striving to attain adequate expression, he wasted his powers on designs beyond his strength. He, being George Darley, did what he was able to do. Though his faith in his own creative powers faltered, his fine sense of values never wavered. He held on his way, resolutely refusing to make any compromise with the age.

Some younger members of the family who made his acquaintance at this time in London have left shadowy recollections of him. One describes him as

'tall and slight, with the stoop of a student, delicate features, slightly aquiline; eyes not large but very earnest, with often a far-away expression, hair dark brown and waving. His manner varied according to his mood and his companions. He was often somewhat of a Diogenes, silent and brooding, subject to fits of gloom and abstraction. At other times he would be vigorous and sarcastic. But when he chose it he could be a delightful companion, for he was brimful of knowledge, and steeped in poetry. His taste and feeling for music were exquisite.'

Another cousin is not much more precise:

'His figure was tall and graceful, his natural movements very striking as he walked; his thoughts seemed to influence unconsciously every movement of his body. His manner had much dignity . . . His face was decidedly handsome, the features well cut, the forehead large, mouth

very expressive. The pale face bore a melancholy expression, and the intellect and imagination—both in constant exercise—left visible traces of their presence⁷

A third remarks on his literary diligence and his habit of covering all his books with annotations. During these last years, indeed, he withdrew more and more from the society of men to commune with books.

Cary is one of the few old friends of whom there is still mention. He also had undergone trials. An illness that followed on his wife's death in 1832 had left his health impaired, and the appointment of the much more competent Panizzi as Keeper of Printed Books in 1837, a considerable disappointment, had been followed by his resignation from the British Museum. He continued his literary work (Darley gave him some little help with his edition of Young). His father's death made his circumstances easier, and in 1841 he was granted a Crown pension of two hundred pounds. Notes from Darley kept by him show that the friendship between the two continued till Cary's death in August 1844.

These notes are not of much importance. Darley, it seems, wished to become a member of the Athenæum Club (founded in 1824) and evidently relied on the help of his friend Julius Hare, who since 1832 had held the family living of Hurstmonceaux and become celebrated as a host. We find Darley, in March 1841, writing to Cary for a list of the club's committee members which Hare wants, and later acknowledging the receipt: 'I am ill yet, or would call. Thank you for the list, tho' so different from Dante's.' The matter probably went no further at the time, for in his last letter to Cary, of February 1844, Darley, then a candidate for election, desires his friend to gain for him the support of the Rev. W. Harness. He does not know, he says, 'the other four proposed . . . being myself unknown. They are all perhaps . . . perplexed to discover who on earth I can be? . . . After dinner to-morrow I hope you will illuminate me a little more on the claims of Euripides & Sophocles.' He was not one of the chosen.

In another note, undated, he wishes Cary, while near the Bodleian, to inquire about the number, state, and quality of certain recently discovered drawings by Raphael, and after gently chaffing one whom he pretends to think is 'in a lamentable state of ignorance about the English Poets', signs himself 'Yours with profound compassion. Doctor doctissimus Darley'. There are three short unimportant notes to Cary's artist son Francis, whose

drawing school Darley recommends in a footnote to an *Athenæum* review.¹ One is addressed to 'Dear Tintoretto', and another, perhaps of 1839, says, 'I am afraid to go before your father, not having *done my Theocritus*'. The most interesting of Darley's later letters to Cary is that concerning the already famous translation of Dante. There is sufficient evidence in his letters that Darley had a good working knowledge of Italian. This he placed at Cary's service for a revised edition of the *Vision*. On 21 February 1842 he writes, 'I leave you the 1st volume of your Dante, with my pencil notes written over again in ink that you may read them more easily, as they are of little consequence. Carlyle's notes being of much more, I have marked these with T. C.' He then proceeds to detailed remarks on a textual question and arguments against attributing to Giotto Dante's portrait in the Duomo at Florence—now generally given to Domenico di Michelino—which he thinks may be by Orcagna. Cary, in the preface to the 1844 edition, acknowledged the aid of several people in correcting errors, including 'my long experienced friend, Mr. Darley, one of our most genuine poets'. His scrutiny resulted in the restoration of a line or two that had been omitted, and a more poetical rendering here and there.

Despite his friendship with the Carys, and occasional visits to Carlyle, Archdeacon Hare, and his relatives the Headleys, Darley's life, from 1842 devoted more persistently to journalism, would have been empty and savourless but for those three young friends he had made in Ireland. Their letters, for a time shy in coming, made bright days in his increasing loneliness and gloom. His letters to them, by turns bantering and serious, whimsical and gloomy, are always full of affectionate and vivid interest in all their doings. The correspondence is resumed in a letter to Laura of 18 March [1841]. Mary Jane, who has been unwell, must be warned to be particularly careful while recovering.

"Twas neglect and my own naughtiness at the said period which caused (I am told) my impediment of speech. Before quite well, I got out of my bed *en chemise* to play, when the Nurse and other cats who had watched were away—and suffered a relapse, fatal to my nerves ever after. Dont let M. J. do that . . . I beg of you.'

After answering her questions about family matters he tells her

¹ Samuel Butler at one time attended Francis Cary's art school. See *Samuel Butler, A Memoir*, by Henry Festing Jones, vol. 1, p. 114. D. G. Rossetti and Millais were also pupils.

that his headaches are less violent but more frequent 'I pursue the semi-starvation system, which appears beneficial, tho it has almost made me look like a pair of pantaloons tied to an empty waistcoat.' Two other letters of this year are to Mary Jane, the eldest of the sisters. The visit to Ireland suggested in the first was postponed.

(To Miss Darley
7 Kildare Street
Dublin)

London 27 Up. Eaton Street,
Eaton Square
April 16 [1841]

My dear little Coz

How long has your affectionate letter been unanswered! how often has the worm that never dies bitten me about it! Everything around me has reminded me of it, & seemed to ask in succession—why dont you write to Mary Jane? the wind howled, the kitten miaowed, the trees sighed & the kettle sung—why dont you write to Mary Jane? It is not your reproaches (which I have no fear of) but *theirs*, that make me now sit down I could until now have written nothing with any pleasure, except my death-warrant Even now I find as much trouble to keep off headache, as the Irishman did to keep off ocean with a pitchfork. Headache is the only visiting acquaintance I can be sure of to the last You who suffer from it, may imagine it must frequently render me unable to do aught in the world—but groan. Truly it reconciles me much to the Guillotine—as a broken leg does the sailor to another instrument of amputation. If one could be but provided with a wooden head, like a wooden leg, almost as good as one's own! We valetudinarians are sad egotists. To have done with this subject—you must be my *confidante* in a certain matter. Suppose & suppose Grandpapa¹ was not to leave Ireland next summer, and that I was to think of visiting it for a few weeks, & billeting myself at Dean's Grange in accordance with his hospitable invitation—could they squeeze me out a corner for my *own, own self*? I dont care how small or how Attic—a room just big enough to hold my bed, & a bed just big enough to hold my body—but all to myself. Besides having, as a Darley, more than the common particularities of an old bachelor, recollect I am also a poet—one of your moody, fantastic, out-o'-the way mortals, as Pope's sister said of him 'a little maddish', & therefore requiring a *ward* in every asylum that receives him I have, too, another Drama on hand, which must be finished this summer, & I should need a *sanctum*, a 'Si quieta', to write in at any or all times when the 'fine frenzy', as we name our rabid intellectual fit, seized me Now be a little bird, like one of those that learn all household secrets, & tell me whether you think Dean's Grange, so thronged as it often is

¹ Henry Darley, her grandfather and his uncle.

with guests, could afford a whole room to one visitor? And whether it *would* afford that to such an Incubus as I am? Next—can you find out for me if there be a lodging hireable at the village hardby? Because to take a bedroom there, & to spend the day at my uncle's, strikes me as a better plan, were it feasible. Let me know like a dear girl, concerning these particulars. If able at all to break up camp here, I should invade Ireland about the commencement or middle of June—probably. Then what pleasant walks & talks we should have to be sure! Is *Sandie* still as good a 'pedestarian' as when she trotted me by her all the way from Springfield house to the tip-top of Big Sugarloaf? I must myself have been meant for a footpad, if taking to the road on Shank's-mare in preference to any other locomotive, be a proof of it. Not that I am a *long* walker, or could 'beat Pinwire of Newcastle' but between 6 & 12 miles (with occasional rest & cake bread at the cottages) would just tire me comfortably. Some few excursions of this kind amongst my own glens & mountains & streams, would I think give me a sounder lease of life—a longer I do not covet. Would the Dargle, Glen of the Downs, & Devil's Glen, be within the compass of your abilities? I fear the Seven Churches at least would be too great a distance—yet to find myself in the same shire with one of the famous Round Towers, & not visit it,—were unpardonable for so 'travelled a gentleman' & such an Oldbuck Junior. We will discuss these projects on meeting.

I am glad to hear that Laura & Henrietta are improved in music—but hope neither they nor you have learnt so many new songs as to have forgotten the old ones. Some profound divine says that the true proof of religious sincerity is your being able to repeat the same prayer time after time with the same fervour as at first—thus also I hold that true enthusiasm for good music consists in hearing the same strains every now & then with unabated interest. Maria D'Arley plays the identical old Irish songs for me at present, that I heard her play when we were first acquainted—& will continue to do so, as her future husband is as fond of them as myself. Therefore don't

'be off with the old love,
Before I am on with the new'.

It is unjust to reproach me about not sending you 'Ethelstan'—did I send you 'Becket'? And the fact was that my publisher seemed dissatisfied at the few copies of the former which I did give away. Besides you told me yourself my style of poetry was 'too classical' for your taste—which character I translate into *harsh, cramp & rugged*, as much nearer the truth. However your Papa liked 'Becket', and I will endeavour to procure *him* an 'Ethelstan'—so you shall read it or not as you please.

How does my daughter Jane behave?¹ The wild Irish girl should now

¹ Her mother.

² In this manner, or as Jenny Warren, he refers to Jane Warren Locke, who had married his brother Henry Brewster Darley on 22 February 1838.

be a little tame, after having been so long *caught*. Give her my love, & tell her to write to me. It will indeed be a comfort when she & Henry reside near me—but I wish they were a little more domestic, like myself

When I'm abroad, my joys are so,
And therefore they to me seem strangers too
I may salute them passingly,
But must not too familiar be;
Some ceremonious points there are
Which me from Pleasure's careless freedom bar.

So sings the old poet, & so chimes in the poetling,
Your's ever

George Darley.

(To Miss Darley
7 Kildare Street
Dublin)

[No address]
10 July (1841).

Dear little Confidante,

Every wise person who knows himself in the wrong begins at once to accuse the opposite party—so you idle hussy, you sacrilegious little jade, why haven't you written to me of late as you were bound to do by all laws civil & ecclesiastical? Why haven't you had even the decency to answer my last letter half a dozen times over & over again? Ay, you'll tell me forsooth that you too have been unwell three days out of four, & up to your eyes in ink the other one—I don't believe a single word—you've been brimming over with health like a Hebe, and dancing & singing away like a tom-tit on a bough, as wild & thoughtless as Jenny Warren herself. You have, you know you have, you! Was there ever such an ill-treated poor creature as I am? Never, never will I forgive you—and as a proof not one syllable will I tell you about *the Wedding*! I will not tell you how his Lordship came in a coach & fourteen, nor how the Bride fainted three times & a half at the word 'obey', nor how the Bishop gave the Bridesmaids all round his pastoral kiss, nor how the breakfast went off, (though peradventure as fast as it could be swallowed), nor how the happy pair went off after it (tho' a different way) with a tail of attendants as long as O'Connell's—No, I'll not tell you one word of all this, and more as veracious—because I didn't see it! My Eminency did not consecrate the proceedings by its presence. To be serious, I could have done Maria no good, & should have put myself to much expence—besides detesting public assemblages, and still more, frigid ceremonies, as marriages now are, now that the good old festive character of them, their heartiness, tho' joined perhaps with homeliness, is abolished. Neither did my affection towards her need any such

¹The marriage of his cousin Maria Darley (or D'Arley), to whom he was much attached, to Lord Headley on 29 June 1841.

stimulants to excite it, nor to make it breathe out warmer wishes for her happiness in her new state. . . .

By the bye, how proceed my Shakesperean & Miltonian pupils?—I don't mean in their music & dancing, but their study of these poets? Question the second perhaps shall be about their music—[tho' it ought, between ourselves, to be about their moral conduct]—for I love that likewise, tho' somewhat less well. Jenny will tell me all about their dancing. What a fine ballet-girl was spoilt when she became a Mrs ! Did you ever see anyone less suited to wear the respectable title of a matron Indeed she has not vindicated her claims to that yet Tell her I bless her the wrong way every night in my prayers for not scratching me off a dear little letter. Does she keep all her scratchings for her husband? . . . I'll accord you my pardon, on condition you send me by *next post* a sheet as big as the Bed of Ware's, filled with just such 'this & that & everything in the world' as my epistle. Do you ever read Congreve?—I don't recommend you (which may perhaps prove a strong inducement to a lady)—but every sentence is a rose-diamond that sparkles on fifty sides at once. That quotation brought his comedies to my mind, & I skip from one subject to another when my spirits are agitated by hurry as at present. Is there indeed any hope of Grandpapa coming abroad next month—my ears are hot with rumours of it, but I shall never believe it till your sweet little voice buzzes with them, 'the tale is true, behold Mary Jane beside you' Come with a whoop all of you. I have forgotten to tell you what you need no ghost perhaps to communicate—that it will be impossible my going to Ireland this year. Therefore 'tis absolutely indispensable you should visit me instead—do, put squibs under Grandpapa's easy chair, & *blow* him out of Dean's Grange.

What a huge deal of fiddle-faddle I have written to you!—but writing to my dear ones makes my heart like a swallow's when she approaches her young, & incites me to go on twitter, twitter, twitter, without end. Believe me 'for mine honour' I do not often write such long letters. My pen burns in my hand like a minikin redhot poker, & I am usually as glad to drop the one as the other. So take my tediousness like Dogberry's for the best proof of my attachment. Your's, ever dearest little Coz, hoping soon to say so in person,

George Darley.

During 1842 Darley contributed more work than usual to the *Athenæum*. His articles include a spirited defence of Horace Walpole followed by an account of the Strawberry Hill collections, a detailed appreciation of Wilkie's work, and two papers on Westminster Abbey containing an iconoclastic attack on the heterogeneous tombs. The two letters that survive in this year are both addressed to Mary Jane.

(To Miss Darley,
7 Kildare Street
Dublin)

London 27 Upper Eaton Street,
Eaton Square
9 Jan^y—42.

Dearest Mary Jane

Your kind letter of last year has remained too long without answer Had I been doing much good, there might be some excuse—or doing much evil—much anything—for day dreaming & poring myself purblind over old-fashioned books is worse than nothing At least so wise people would pronounce. Yet I can't tell how—this same *dolce far niente* scarce leaves me an idle moment—keeps me wide awake as the stars till long after midnight, and often renders me jealous of tom the cat with his nine whole lives—when I have scarce half one good one, wherein to worship the Nine Muses at once. Do you not observe as you read or write that there is no understanding any single matter by itself, without some knowledge at least of numberless others connected with it? Take Hume's England for example, which you speak of—every second so-called fact in his work is apocryphal, and you must read half a dozen other historians, in order to find the truth at last Historians' ay, and antiquaries, heralds, glossarists, biographers, law-writers, &c, &c Don't be frightened from your studies by this muster-roll of musty authorities—however dubious Hume's facts may be, his philosophical reflections are almost always sound, & form the true worth, the valuable staple of his volumes As you consult me about your present course of studies, I do not much approve (how legislative a word!) any of them save Hume, & Leo V. You may pick up something from Reviews, but they are not what they were, and never were much better than whipt-cream food for the mind,—a rich, agreeable froth without solid nourishment within.

Florian was a namby-pamby writer of historical (that is, *non*-historical) novels—cultivates & encourages false sentiment, the affectations by way of the affections, & is in short a model of intellectual mawkishness, as well as I can recollect. Keats has written many beautiful passages, but the general character of his poetry cannot be too much condemned—beyond all other injurious to a taste not yet formed It is 'sicklied o'er with the very palest cast of thought', & at best resembles one of those beauties who fed upon rose-leaves instead of wholesome flesh, fish, & fowl. Shelley stands now far higher as a poet—with all the world but myself! I think he has none of Keats's merits, & almost every one of his defects—true he is less effeminate, but *en revanche* his force is forced, & when he would exhibit *power* puts me in mind of Marsyas flayed, shewing a repulsive accumulation of muscles. Have I read 'Beauty & the Beast'? Ay to be sure I have, & had rather have written it than all Keats, Shelley, & Co. ever wrote, or will write with goosequills plucked from their own angelic wings! I delight in these child's stories, especially the little books with gold-fish covers—not these newfashioned substitutes

so neat & spruce, but without half the contents of the others, & with little or nothing of the original, picturesque stories. Could you buy me (anywhere about Christ-Church or Kevin Street or so) some of the old-fashioned goldfish storybooks? I would send you in exchange double the number of hot-pressed modern ones, with broad margins, & three lines of print on every page—12 pages per book

I regretted, & did not regret, my absence from your merrymakings last year I could not have enjoyed them True social pleasure is like true religion, that in which there is 'perfect freedom'—& perfect freedom can seldom be felt with such a fetter on the tongue as an impediment. Your account of Wilham does not surprise me—but you try him by a severe test in company with Charles, who must have made him appear frostwork itself beside his own 'loving, & loveable, nature'. Yet William is not without heart Recollect, as compared with me, there was no *Springfield tie* to draw you & him so close together . . .

I should like a *den* midway between Dublin & Stillorgan for a month or two some year or so hence—from which I might creep once in a week to Dean's Grange, the Park, 7 Kildare Street, & 34 Merrion Street respectively Let me dream the event possible . . .

Of course you look for but few answers from a perpetual scribbler—what between writings at length, jottings downs, notings of works under perusal, &c, the pen is hardly ever out of my hand, so I am glad to drop it when possible Reversely, to *read* a letter is recreation, at least letters from such a correspondent as you. . . .

Are there no more good husbands going amongst you (I mean, coming)? Is the place you live in another heaven, where there are no givings in marriage? You must all be very happy at home I suspect, & indeed a happy home is the likeliest thing on earth to heaven. Love to all who love me

Ever your's dear Mary Jane,
G. D

Fortunately the warnings of the mentor did not deter Mary Jane from reading Shelley. He is among the modern authors who figure in her journal during the next few years. Others noted as having been read are Tennyson and Ruskin, whose *Modern Painters*—the first two volumes—was perhaps recommended to her by Darley. The next letter mentions the play of his brother Charles that failed signally when produced by Macready.

(To Miss Darley
7 Kildare Street Dublin)

Clarence Club London
2 July (1842).

Dear little Coz

I forget how the ledger stands between us, but suppose from your indignant silence that there must be a letter due to you. Upon my

honour as a gentleman & no soldier my time has been so taken up by scribbling & groaning with headache on the sofa, that I have not had leisure to answer your last of this day twelve months. You will certainly be an old bachelor like myself, if you are so punctilious. Why don't you scratch me off a letter of anythings, or nothings, every now & then without a reference to your balance-sheet of epistles. Have you become Book-keeper to the Firm at No 2, that you are so strict an accountant? O you little tot-&-carry one!

Pray now, your offended Highness, come down from your palfrey, when you see how humbly I kiss the hem of your flannel petticoat & ask your pardon. Tell me, do, all the un-moving accidents by flood & field which have taken place at No 7 since two years ago when you last wrote. No matter what chit-chat it may be—all is goldfish that comes to my net from anyone I love. Have you ever felt, heartless little body! what a sweet word that is?—remark how softly the lips close in pronouncing it—*love*—as if they were afraid of stifling it. Well, must not the precious thing itself lend a value to the merest trifle said or sung or scribbled by the person beloved? And are you not one of my Springfield birds? Didn't you nestle yourself into my warmest affection when I was at Prospect? Didn't you become a young crony of mine, I say, you daughter of your mother you! So don't wait till you can write Miltonisms & Shakespear-e-anties to me—I would rather have Mary-Jamties by a vast deal . . .

Apropos. have you ever read Gray's Letters? They are models—far the best in English literature—and the *most* best (Shakespeare!) because or chiefly because they are about 'this & that & everything in the world' as Lady Pliant says—the easiest, slipshodiest, naturalest, Jenny Warrenest things imaginable. That is when they are not on grave classical subjects—for Jenny is seldom classical, & never grave except about trimmings for a bonnet or some such serious, *really* important, matter. Of course you are familiar with Cowper's Letters . . .

Visionary you may call me as much as you please, but I often hear my hearse jingle at no great distance. Such continual ill-health *must* soon wear me out—'twill give me a *quietus* however, that's some comfort! therefore away with melancholy as the song says. You must excuse my fits of it—they will break out—& what's the use of cronyism if I can't open my pippin to you? Thank heaven my heart is so small—a bigger one would be only a broader target for Pain to shoot her poisonous shafts at, a tenderer one would be the more easily pierced. All the deepest sorrows I feel & have felt, had their well-spring in my affections such as they were. But I am falling into the slough of Despond again. Pretty entertainment for a young lady! I'll be less of a killjoy if possible.

How goes on your Music? have you learned any new songs, or rather have you retained the old ones? for old songs are to me like old friends, the dearer every day. Birds you know always sing the same strains—&

who tires of them that has any taste? Should I indeed ever visit Ireland, & find you have forgotten your wildbird notes, or acquired Italian graces instead of your own, hide yourself in a bandbox from my indignation. Have you read much since, & what? How much Shakespeare, & how little Byron? confess the truth! What do you think of 'Plighted Troth'—and what do you think of the public who can receive it with such coldness? Are they not like 'adders,' deaf to the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely? When that most sapient public too will become one huge ear to drink in the sentimental nonsense uttered by poetasters who swarm as thick but cannot buzz half as sweet as may-flies, nor deserve to be as long-lived I am sick of such things! & sicker of the public than of its poets. Don't suppose me prejudiced—I see a thousand faults & extravagancies in the play—it was ill-suited for representation, ill adapted thereto both by author & manager, but it contains beauties I aver which must be obvious I aver to all save positive mental blindness. Well, *n'importe*—I wish the public joy of their poets, & the poets joy of their public! *C'est assez . . .*

You may guess my surprise & delight at 'Saidie's' visit to London—I could not see much of her, she was in such request—but she sacrificed a whole evening to me alone, for tho' Mr. B . . . & George Johnston¹ were present, she made me her 'pineapple & would not divide it with them' (this witticism is her's, you might guess from its spirituality). I have conceited myself a great dainty ever since—myself the sourest crab any one of your sex could attempt to chew with a grimace, & enough to give her the green-sickness. O what a divine gift indeed is the gift of tongues—how willingly would I exchange for it my little knack at verses! But

'he that hath a little tiny wit,

Must make content with his fortunes fit,'

as the fool in 'Twelfth Night' says², with perfect wisdom. We are to have a grand *Conversazione* at my hermitage in Eaton Street tomorrow night—Johnston, young B . . ., & self they are the only guests I ever ask, having but a hash of broken English to offer, which goodnatured boys accept as entertainment. I wish your minikin phyz would pop itself in among us—how my long face would expand at the sight. Will you drop in—from the clouds? Do!

Now haven't I written you a prodigy of a letter—one that any gossip might be proud to have cackled with her goosequill. Answer it in the same vein, & with the same assurance it will meet an affectionate reception. Don't take three years more about it as about the last one!

Ever your's dearest child,

George Darley

Plighted Troth; or, *A Woman Her Own Rival* is an uncommonly weak play to read, notwithstanding Darley's warm brotherly

¹ Her brother, George Johnstone Darley.

² *King Lear*, Act III, Sc. II.

defence. On the stage it must have been intolerable, no matter how good the acting. It unfolds a ridiculous story of true love threatened by the machinations (the right word here) of two villains who by preying upon each other allow the innocent to enjoy their own again. What dramatic moments it has are achieved at enormous cost. It is the kind of play that the Stage Society of those days, had there been one, might have produced, for critics, if they were discreet, to damn as an interesting failure. Macready was a bold man, as other ventures besides this prove, and the character of Sir Gabriel Grimwood, fustian though it is, attracted him. It does, indeed, gather up the drama's few opportunities, and these are such as would attract an actor of Macready's stamp. He could revel in avarice, passion, insanity, repentance, and heroic death. The fortunes of the play may be followed in these extracts from his *Diaries* which, it will be seen, are not altogether out of place here. They form the comedy or tragedy, at the reader's discretion, of a deserving author.

1841, *Jan.* 21 —Called on Dickens and gave him Darley's first copy of 'Ethelstan'

Aug. 6th —Finished the play of 'Plighted Troth'—a play written in a quaint style, but possessing the rare qualities of intense passion and happy imagination. Forster called and dined, I read to him several scenes from 'Plighted Troth', with which he was greatly struck. He took away the MS. to read . . . Wrote to Rev C. F. Darley, author of 'Plighted Troth'.

Aug. 8th —. . . Rev. C. F. Darley called, we talked over the play of 'Plighted Troth'. He expressed himself happy & obliged by my opinion, and declared himself the brother of *the* Darley! He left me *carte-blanche* with regard to the play.

Aug. 13th.—Letter from Darley. . . .

1842, *March* 27th —Mr C. Darley called, and I went over with him the play, as to structure, of 'Plighted Troth', and showed him the necessity of further omission and dove-tailing—he assented to all, his manners are very frank and pleasant.

March 30th.—Read 'Plighted Troth' to Catherine and Letitia, who were much struck with it.

March 31st —At the theatre spoke to Phelps about his part and read the play of 'Plighted Troth', which produced a great effect.

April 3rd Mr. Charles Darley called, and we talked over the suggested alterations that had occurred to me. He was perfectly satisfied with the suggestions and mentioned his wish, if I were not adverse, to inscribe the play to me. I could only say how proud I was of the compliment.

April 5th —. . . Employed the evening in looking through some folios

of the 'Galérie de Versailles' for subjects for room and costume for 'Plighted Troth'

April 17th — . . . Counted the lines of the play, which I found to amount to at least 2,236—a startling number, but I have a feeling like hope—perhaps akin to trust—in the massive language and fine thoughts properly spread over this play I dare not, however, indulge in expectation. Gave the employment of the day to the thought and reading of my part of Grimwood in 'Plighted Troth'

April 19th.—Went to Drury Lane theatre Attended there to business of all kinds. Rehearsed the play of 'Plighted Troth', which occupied me the whole day Mr Darley was present. . . . In the evening read the part of Grimwood

April 20th —Went to the theatre, trying to keep my thoughts on the acting of my part Rehearsed the play of 'Plighted Troth' Became confident in hope about it Looked at the chance of a brilliant success . . . Rested. Acted nervously; but *the play was unsuccessful*. Long consultation afterwards on what should be done Anderson, C Jones, Serle, Willmott, and Forster I wished to do justice to the author, and we agreed at last to give it another trial Chance I fear there is none. *Elon!* A most unhappy failure, I have felt it deeply, deeply

April 21st —Came down, wretchedly low at heart, worn, done, and depressed by the issue of last night and the want of sleep I did not sleep at all through the night I cannot imagine how I could have been so mistaken Surely I could not believe that to be poetry, thought, energy, imagination, and melody of rhythm which was totally devoid of all these! Wrote an answer to Miss Power Mr. Darley called. We talked over the matter of last night. He was much depressed, and I agonised for him He deserved to succeed The result of our conference was that he could not make the alterations suggested to his play by this day's rehearsal, and, therefore, that he would wish the play to be withdrawn.

April 22nd —Received a note from Dr. Ashburner, informing me that Darley would call on me, and wishing me to speak encouragingly to him. God knows I need no prompter to act in kindness and sympathy towards him. A note—a most kind note—from Bulwer in relation to Mr. Darley's play I enclosed it to Mr. Darley, with a cordial expression of sympathy and a cheque for £34 . . .

April 23rd —At dinner received a most affecting note from Darley that almost reconciles me to the misery that has been my lot this week.

April 24th — Gave much attention to *Marino Faliero*, which I begin to like, but I never dare venture to hope again! . . . Called on Darley and left him a note. . . . No word from Forster to smooth the fall of 'Plighted Troth'. The whole evening to *Marino Faliero*, which improves on me.

May 7th.— . . . Darley called and showed me his preface to 'Plighted Troth', which will come out next week.

May 22nd —Mr and Mrs. Everett, Sir John & Miss Goldsmid, Mr & Mrs Emerson Tennant, Barry, R A., Sir M A Shee, P R A , Edwin Landseer, R A , and Darley dined with us

The criticism that appeared in the *Athenæum* of 23 April shows how complete was Macready's discomfiture.

Drury Lane —The new play, 'Plighted Troth', produced on Wednesday, proved a failure. The audience was mostly friendly and well disposed, and silenced some opposition in the earlier scenes, but the most tolerant were at last compelled tacitly to acquiesce in the condemnatory opinion unequivocally expressed at the conclusion. The play was announced the next day, but subsequently withdrawn, on the plea of the 'indisposition of a principal performer'. We hope it will not be played again, for the attempt would be unsuccessful, and only provoke hostility.

The play, not dedicated to Macready, was printed in its original form as a Dramatic Tale, with a dignified preface, and without the author's name. If we may believe the title-page, it reached a second edition in the same year, and Charles Darley had attained a distinction denied to his brother.

Darley had the pleasure of welcoming Mary Jane in the summer when she passed through London on her way to a continental tour. We learn from her diary that she called to see him on 16 July, having the day before heard Rachel at the Queen's Theatre in the *Cid* and part of *Maria Stuart*. When she returned from her travels early in 1843 they met again. An entry of 21 January tells us that 'G. Darley came over to see us after breakfast & took me over to George's Square to arrange about Jane Warren's mantilla with the milliner'. There is a complete break in the letters to Ireland for this year, or they were not preserved. There is, indeed, very little information about Darley in 1843. His *Athenæum* contributions, now devoted to matters of art, were regular enough, and there is little doubt that he remained in London quietly working. He was certainly there in August, when all wise people had left the city, for he paid a call then that was not altogether welcome. The episode is so full of constraint and humorous suffering, so complete a comedy, that it must be told in the lady's own vivid words. It is Jane Welsh Carlyle writing to her husband at Scotsbrig, Ecclefechan, from Chelsea, on Sunday night, 27 August:

'Dearest,—Another evening, in thought set apart for you, has been eaten up alive by "rebellious consonants". I had told Helen to go after

dinner and take herself for a long walk, assuring her nobody could possibly arrive, for the best of reasons, that "there was not a human being left in London". And just when I had fetched up my own tea, and was proceeding to "enjo-y it" quite in old maid style, there arrived Darley, the sight of whom gave me a horrible foretaste of fidgets and nameless woe, which was duly fulfilled to me in good time. However, it is to be hoped that he got a little good for having a mouthful of human (or rather, to speak accurately, inhuman) speech with someone, and in that case one's care being "the welfare of others", etc. etc. For myself individually, I feel as if I had spent the evening under a harrow. . . .'

And he who came so inopportunately no doubt felt like a mouse escaped from under the exquisite torture of keen claws. On this most uncomfortable evening for both, the scene is so perfectly set that it is a thousand pities the words are wanting. There is opportunity, indeed, for an imaginary conversation that almost writes itself. Darley evidently had good reason for his solitary habits. Thomas Carlyle, in spite of the interlude, received his long letter, and when annotating it in after years, describes Darley as 'mathematician, considerable actually, and also poet, an amiable, modest, veracious, and intelligent man; much loved here, though he stammered dreadfully'. It is a little strange that Carlyle, who was so deplorably wide of the mark in his judgement on Lamb, should have appreciated Darley. The two were probably introduced by Milnes or Cunningham, and on one subject about which Carlyle invoked the aid of the former—the Yorkshire Darleys of Long Parliament days—perhaps Darley was able to be of use. His mathematics, a something solid, obviously stood him in good stead at Cheyne Walk. But Carlyle went beyond that, past the man also and his stammer, to the poet, of whom he wrote with decisive admiration 'There is a trick of sham Elizabethan writing now prevalent that looks plausible, but in most cases means nothing at all. Darley has real lyrical genius, Taylor, wonderful sense, clearness, and weight of purpose; Tennyson a rich and exquisite fancy. All the other men of our tiny generation that I know of are, in poetry, either feeble or fraudulent.' That is a contemporary verdict of weight.

Later in 1843 (on 4 November) Darley contributed to the *Athenæum* an interesting collection of maxims from his note-book. The English language is not so well suited to this form of expression as the French, and Darley's work invites no comparison with that of the masters. Yet these aphorisms have their value. If

some of them are trite enough for a young lady's album, others are the well-shaped fruits of deep reflection. And since all have some bearing on the character of their author we print them in full.

Versimilitudes.

Those who talk much should think a little.

A skull without a tongue often preaches better than a skull that has one.

There are many people, whose whole wisdom consists in hiding their want of it.

A witty man can make a jest, a wise man take one.

The most sensible people are generally the least sensitive.

Laurels grow best in grave-yards

God is like the air, never seen yet always about us.

A wit and a fool in company, are like a crab and an oyster—the one watches till the other opens his mouth that he may catch him up.

If the Man-in-the-Moon could speak to men upon earth, how many would blush to hear him!

There are more men like women, than women like men.

Silence is the deep fountain of Eloquence.

A man's favourite prejudice is the *nose of his mind*, which he follows into whatsoever predicament it may lead him

Our weakest years engender passions which our strongest are unable to eradicate.

Friends should have the same tastes but different talents.

Time is a tell-tale, who, like other tell-tales, embellishes the truth as often as he disfigures it.

Words hurt more than blows, and heal more than balsams.

Distinctions of words are determinations of ideas.

The greatest effects often flow from the slightest causes.—A History of Remarkable Events might have for its frontispiece father Peneus or Eridanus pouring a river out of a pitcher.

Better to be brought up at a good mother's knee than at the feet of a Gamahel.

When Prometheus stole fire from heaven he burnt his fingers.

Ignorance makes some men bold and others timid.

Death is often less painful than the thought of it.

Presume a virtue though you see it not.

The chief pleasures of knowledge are derived from our own previous ignorance and the existing ignorance of others, that is, in the attainment and the display.

Prayer is not so much 'the gate of heaven' as the knocker of the gate.

An injury committed with a good grace will often be more tolerable than a benefit conferred with an ill one.

Maxims should seldom be stated absolutely.

Johnson says of Pope (what had been said of Pindar) that 'the bees swarmed about his mouth in the cradle'. if so, they left their stings as well as their sweetness

Nobility and Mobility only differ by a pothook.

The greatest conquerors are but the lieutenants of Death.

What a deal of trouble the gunsmith saves the gallows-maker!

One foe has the sincerity of a dozen friends.

Our acts will be sure to make us enemies enough, let our manners at least make us partizans for every injurious deed we do we should at least say a dozen civil things.

Fear is often mistaken for conscience.

Was the spectre which Brutus saw his 'evil genius' or his evil conscience?

Ill-temper puts as many briefs into the lawyer's bag as injustice

Our very virtues cannot be with safety left to themselves.

Refined taste often makes us appear insensible, as want of refined taste often makes us appear enthusiastic

The heart of man has often wept blood because the eye of childhood has been spared a tear.

Maxims suggested are sounder than maxims invented.

How many histories beside Raleigh's have been written in a dungeon—in darkness and narrowness of mind!

Knowledge of other countries will teach you to know your own.

Darley opened his journalistic work in 1844 with a long and vigorous review of the first volume of Ruskin's *Modern Painters*. During this year he was contributing occasional verse and short stories, both mediocre, to *Bentley's Miscellany* and the distinguished *Illuminated Magazine*, a venture too good to last, edited in turn by Douglas Jerrold and W. J. Linton. The Irish correspondence was resumed in March with a letter to Mary Jane who is entrusted with the secret that he intends to visit Ireland in the summer, and authorized to report on the project.

(To Miss Darley,
7 Kildare Street,
Dublin.)

Parthenon Club, Regent Street.
23 March [1844]

Carissima mia Maria-Giovanna (That is to say you careless little baggage!)

I direct this from my Club tho' not written there—but at present my lodgings are nowhere, nor will peradventure be anywhere exactly for longer & longer than I can tell. You must suppose me a veritable Bird of Paradise, always on the wing, & with my resting-place *en l'air*—so unless you can shoot flying, your letters would miss me except at the Parthenon. 'Letters' forsooth! as if you wrote me such bundles. You

must however soon send me one—because upon *business*. Did I wish to punish you dear girl for your silence, 'twould not be by keeping silence myself, but breaking it often—I have no more colloquial power in words of will than in words of air With me 'tis all 'bookth, bookth' (to use Jenny's expression)—they are the single subject upon which I can write running-hand A life of solitude augments this natural defect—keeps me ignorant of common topics, & renders my correspondence as un-agreeable as my conversation My very goosequill seems to have an impediment in its speech—O that it could cackle about interesting matters! The solitude makes one such an egotist—being shut up in one's self, what can one talk of except one's-self? My letters, when I read them over, are like a boy's copybook filled with the third vowel in capitals—I, I, I, I, &c.

Well—not to be egotistic even while condemning my egotism—so Kildare Street No. 7 is a kind of solitude too—a 'Si quæta', where you live like three nuns in a Vallombrosa of overshadowing chimney-tops? And you are content there? O you philosopheresses! You little miss-anthropes! Marry-come up, 'little', says Fair-Star—but I hope she has not grown a glum-dalchitch^{*} My Miltonian pupil must have become a huge-*aceous* young lady by this time—(that's a new adjective an enthusiastic chambermaid coined t'other day)—indeed from what I hear, Henriette is quite a juvenile Siddons figure—is her voice Siddons-like too? does she talk in majestic semibreves? they would harmonize well with the deep tone of Milton's poetry. Odd enough that Jenny Madcap should like such three sobrieties as you are! I was glad to learn from a better source than her husband (his spectacles have glasses so very green!) that she now enjoys good health & spirits A perpetual round of excitement seems to agree with her as well as with a squirrel in its whirling cage. Her gay temperament is *her* philosophy—& perhaps temperament makes more persons surmount the ills of life than themselves imagine or at least acknowledge—they would rather that their reasoning or religion obtained the credit. How is my Grandchild's eldest tooth? & has she got any younger ones? I long to see the little wretch—but shall never dare to handle it, lest its complexion might come off like the meal from a butterfly at so rude a touch. Lady Headley's poppet is the finest little fating—as if it had been *twins* rolled into one. Brewster has perhaps told you about it—tho' he seems quite engrossed by his blue devils, which he thinks worse than the black ones 'Twas a relief to see him, for he had written me such doleful accounts of his health, they filled me with apprehensions I found him delicate it is true, but only just ill enough to be interesting, not alarming Yet he talked of himself as if he had bespoken his coffin! This is the worst effect of dyspepsia—hypochondriacism—the fancy becomes more diseased than the body, a real evil (sprung from an unreal cause) & the most irradicable of all

^{*} Glumdalchitch, or 'little nurse'. See *Gulliver's Travels*, A Voyage to Brobdingnag.

evils I saw little of him however—our visits were few & far between; whence you may imagine them *very angeth*. The truth is we differ so much in tastes, habits, pursuits, &c, that almost not a single sympathy draws us together. I perceive this at long & at last, with the greatest regret, after having endeavoured to disbelieve it like a State of Annihilation. But good God wherefore do we desire friendship? to feel, or to inflict, sorrow when we die! My solitary life is the more blessed after all—selfish indeed it may be called, yet the Benefactor of the world himself is a solitary Being. . . .

Very Private. Here I am about to make you the Confidante of a secret, in which no one has the least interest, except myself, who feel it all important. My purpose is—to visit Ireland this summer Arthur Lee[†] has perhaps told you so already (under permission). Amiable, excellent A. L. entices me over by the kindest, friendliest, solicitations. He has offered me a cell in his house for my sole use—thus with a misanthrope like me is a *sine qua non*. You guess correctly that I ‘would rather be amongst my own people at the Grange’, but even if they could afford me a whole room twould be churlish of me to monopolize it, when tired Sunday visitors would have no English objection to partake it. Now tell me, under the rose, would there be any such claims on my generosity at Stillorgan Park? If yes, I had rather not go, as ‘twould give me equal annoy to grant or deny them. Understand that, beside the English prejudice against ‘pigging together’, & my aversion to the effort of talking, there is yet another reason—I shall have to *write* a good deal, & thus I do often (always best) when ‘all is wrapt in dark midnight & all are fast asleep’, as the Old Ballad says. Your answer, recollect, must be very candid—don’t deceive me as you have many a poor ‘young man’ before. Goodbye for the present

Your affectionate grand-uncle

G. D

I wrote all but last 4 lines 3 days ago

The next letter, of 24 April, is still mainly concerned with the great question of where he shall stay. Though he appreciates the invitation from Stillorgan Park he would prefer to be *at home* with his uncle at Dean’s Grange. Yet a room to himself is essential—‘I will not pig with a he-angel in Elysium itself’—and that is probably more than his uncle can promise without inconvenience. He awaits her verdict and concludes:

‘Your opinion *raisonnée* of “Ethelstan” gives me especial pleasure—because it exhibits a discrimination rare among even the approvers of that work. They generally fix on the love-scenes, or inferior parts—it is a purified & elevated taste alone that perceives Ethelstan himself to be

* His kinsman, Arthur Lee Guinness of Stillorgan Park.

worth all the rest. Miss Edgeworth pronounces him a *murderer*, & rates me for endeavoring [to] throw any interest over such a scélérat! What can be expected from the critics after this?"

Mary Jane, having decided that it is wiser to accept the certainty of a whole room at Stillorgan Park, is soon engaged on another commission. Darley has also much to say about his brother Henry.

(To Miss Darley,
7 Kildare Street,
Dublin)

London. 6 Belgrave Street *South*
Belgrave Square
29th April [1844]

Dear little Confidante,

Your prompt reply to my question was very conclusive—it has set me at ease about accepting A L's kind offer, so far as the dormitory is concerned. I wrote to him forthwith, which no doubt he told you—and proposed some time between June & August for my visit. This would be the period, not to say most convenient, but alone *possible* for a valetudinarian like myself. I am a living thermometer, I feel every change of the season as sensitively as the tooth of ingratitude, & less philosophically. However it would annoy me much were Arthur to sacrifice the most splendid portion of the year on my account. He may have some excursion, or some visitor far preferable to me, in view. Do you think you could find out whether *July* or *August* would or would not suit his arrangements? His epistle (just received) says 'Midsummer'—but this is a wide word. To billet such an incubus as I am, upon him, when perhaps he has set apart that very month for a pleasant ramble or agreeable guest—'twould be quite cruel! *You* know, you must know, what a mere dead-weight my presence is—a wet double-blanket—except now & then, at long intervals, if books, old ones, happen to form the subject of discourse. But poor A L. is unaware of this, & because I can talk a couple of hours, once in a way, when excitement enables me to surmount all obstacles, he imagines me a companionable friend! My visit will soon teach him the truth, but nothing short of this dear bought experience will do so. It is my business to prevent him buying it at the cost of pleasure sacrificed as well as pain received. And therefore I trouble you, dearest & truest depositary of my state-secret, with the above commission. We must not let A L. be too great a sufferer by his imprudent enthusiasm!

I hope you (all three) will be at Stillorgan during my stay. It would render the ordeal both to A L. and myself, somewhat endurable—the bed of thorns would have its rose-leaves. Nevertheless, do not you sacrifice any the smallest object for me—that would make the rose leaves themselves *all* over prickles. Isn't it vain of an old bachelor to imagine such a sacrifice?—but it shows how he estimates your good nature. . . .

• When George H. . . . told me t'other day he had spent *nine years* of uninterrupted happiness at home,—he a mere boy,—it struck me as incredible. Why all we four brothers, now *boys* no longer, could not sum up so many months of pleasant existence between us! Without the least exaggeration, I profess myself unable to recollect even spending nine consecutive *hours* happily,—nay, without positive pain, moral or corporeal. A sort of reckless stoicism or callous resignation has for years been my summit of bliss—& in having such a refuge sad as it is, I believe myself better off than Henry. *His* mind seems to furnish him no sedative against life's fitful fever, but rather stimulants which continually enrage it. I fear he never will be well, yet perhaps, from the above temperament, will always imagine himself yet worse than he is—at least I hope this explains his depressive accounts of his case.

Our unsympathetic dispositions, which you think strange, may become intelligible enough if you consider how circumstances have moulded them—living so much with the dead has deadened my interest about things present, while his practical life makes him hold them all-important. There is besides a native difference in our characters—his more resembles that of Charles, & mine that of William. Then I am his senior by several years, and am moreover the dullest of animated clods that walk their mother earth—which alone would account for 'a fellow of his infinite wit' having little sympathy with me. At all events such is the fact—& we must bow to it—I would rather have *no* communion between us than an irksome one. This has always been my maxim—utter isolation would be far preferable to standing amidst a very thicket of half-faced friends. This too has kept me a *Calebs* despite my love of your sex—I should have felt quite mal-content unless adored, yet am not adorable! What a romancing madman, you'll say—well, he is a wise madman after all who keeps himself under restraint, who lest he should work his own or another's perpetual misery, goes into his cell & sits there silent & patient if not altogether enchanted with his condition. But how have I been rambling! . . .

The Headleys are at Brighton—my Aunt & Laura join them today, & all have quit Kensington I fear for ever. This is a vast loss to me—their house was just the one, & was the only one, which afforded me the precise measure of social enjoyment suitable to my wishes (or rather powers)—a quiet evening about once a month, with mingled conversation and music. They of course will expect me often at Brighton, but even with them more than a few hours at a time makes my tongue ache. My fingers should ache, & your eyes, with all I have written

Ever your's.

In July, after chronicling the important Penrice picture sale, Darley set out on his long-heralded visit to Ireland. He was returning as a thoroughly disappointed man, broken in health,

to wander for the last time among the rocky hills and wild *glens* of his youth. Yet it was far from a hopeless journey. He never perhaps embarked on any voyage with a more confident heart, safe as he was in the knowledge of the surprising good that had, at last, been granted him. A starved man is grateful for little. Darley, starved in both ambition and affection, was given much. He could have received no sweeter comfort than the loving society of these young cousins who cherished him for his own sake. The gentle course of the visit, a lyric interlude all too brief, may be divined in the retrospect of the later letters. It lasted much longer than he had planned, and enriched the short remainder of his life with the happiest memories.

One thing in Ireland he thought remarkable enough to describe for the *Athenæum*, the atmospheric railway which ran the one and three-quarter miles from Kingstown to Dalkey in the 'whirlwind pace' of about two minutes. One defect it had, an unpleasant sidling joggle, but the delights were manifold.

'... the atmospheric carriages glide on with little more noise than Queen Mab's coaches; their sound resembled most the rustle of autumn leaves swept forward by a low wind—very mysterious, and rather awful! None of that continuous harsh bluster and bewildering screech from a dozen valves and vent-holes, before you set off, nor of that eternal puffing, panting, snorting, and fiery evomition—like the efforts of a broken-winded dragon to swallow the ground in his fierceness and rage—with which the common train-engines stun, stupify, and derange you. When you proceed, none of the clatter from a tail of carriages as if a colossal rattle-snake were on your track. Besides, you are not sitting near a huge copper bomb-shell ever ready to burst, and a furnace threatening to lick up with its flamy tongues the whole wooden apparatus (human contents included) behind it. You are not smothered with smoke, grit-gravel, and coal-dust ...'

The ordinary railways, so effectively pictured by contrast, he thought would unite England and Ireland by another and a stronger Act of Union. But they were not very efficiently managed. He tells one story to illustrate this that is thoroughly in keeping with the reputation of Irish railways in literature.

'At a certain much-frequented station, I walked round and through the entire premises without having paid and without being challenged, walked where the passengers who had paid waited, and whence the carriages set off. Upon my asking the check-taker, behind whose very back I came out, wherefore this was permitted, he replied with the most delicious *zâiveté*, because the other policeman "happened to be at his

breakfast!" Admit the possible negligence, but think of such an excuse in England! Yet I confess it had a charm,* and bespoke a simpleness of manners among the Irish which pervades even their misconduct itself'

When the time came for departure he had not the heart to bid farewell, but stole away leaving behind a note for Laura.

(To Miss L. Darley.)

Still (organ) Park

Friday 11 Oct [1844]

Dearest Poppie

Among the verses I brought over to Ireland, there was no one piece which I thought would suit you—so I have copied out two or three Sonnets possessing the three qualities you wished if no other—they are written by myself, are in my own hand, & are (together) sufficiently *long*. I could wish them for your sake much better—at least of a less sombre character. But perhaps like myself you may prefer the 'Penseroso' to the 'Allegro'—accept them dear Girl whether no, as a souvenir

I had promised Mama & Mary to meet them at the Grange next Sunday, and you not to 'steal off'—but you recollect 'they say at lovers' perjuries, Jove laughs'—this beautiful calm weather tempts me—I really *did* think the storms would have kept me till next week—I should have gone a fortnight ago!—you will all forgive me. Indeed I dislike partings—especially from those so beloved as yourselves.

Ever theirs & yours, my dearest sweetest little Bird

George à Becket.

N.B. Arthur will give you this and the two vols. of Crabbe which Papa was kind enough to lend me

In this were enclosed the two sonnets called *Retrospection* and the poem beginning 'By the far murmur of a waterfall'. Laura, we may take it, appreciated Darley's poetry more deeply than her sisters. 'You understand me I believe better than Mary does,' he writes later, 'she seemed once or twice frightened out of her wits at my extravaganzas—is it that you are a little wild-witted yourself? But she has more sound sense than us both—tho' I possess a vast fund of wisdom, it is true very much akin to Jenny Warren's.' Mary, the practical housekeeper, though often teased for being too 'common-sensible', nevertheless remained his chief stay and confidante. About a month later he writes to her

(To Miss Darley,

7 Kildare Street, Dublin.)

Thursday 14th Nov^r [1844].

6 Belgrave Street South. B. Square.

Dearest little Bird,

If you wished for me at Kildare St the other night, how often do I wish for you here. Every night believe me. Yes, and many many times a day

—but in particular when evening comes, when the wall of darkness shuts out the world, as well as the wall of brick & mortar, then I could so wish to see your bright little face make sunshine within my room. 'Twould be so pleasant wouldn't it just to hear my bird hum a 'Song of the Olden Time' in harmony with what Wordsworth calls 'the kettle's sweet, deep under-song'—& to have her hovering about me at the time all else is so still. But little birds don't care for *books*—& my head would be often as deeply poked into one of them as into my saucer. Who cares, says you, either for old books or old bachelors? Why that's what I says too—nevertheless one might wish twere otherwise. After all perhaps it is better as it is—if a bird of paradise itself, I mean an angel, saw much of me, she would hate me before long, finding me a most disagreeable devil—and I don't want to lose any love you may have for me. In sober seriousness 'tis this very conscious, I will add *conscientious*, recollection of my acrid & morose temper which makes me isolate myself—& I cannot overcome the demon that possesses me. You would throw up three eyes if you had them with amazement at my mode of life here—since my arrival, I have not spoke one word to human creature except a few of your beloved house-keeping ones to my servant-girl, & she is a beast. Yes, I had a little business-talk with an editor, & a how d'ye do with my sole friend Carlyle. 'What a strange animal you must be yourself' (says you)—granted, but besides what I said above, really to talk gives me such pain, mental & physical, that I prefer isolation as the lesser evil. You ask me do I 'ever feel calm & contented & disposed to be pleased with all the world?' The first sometimes, the second to some degree (a kind of sighing resignation), the last *never*—because to be pleased with the world one must be pleased with one's self! Assure yourself of that.

Now I'll answer your other question—my health seems a leetle-eetle better since my return—here I can regulate my diet, & restrain myself—at kind hearted Arthur's hospitable board 'twas impossible, at least for so liquorish a tooth as mine. I have got rid in great measure of the nervous sensation which kept both my ears beating like a double-drum, & my brain-pan like a kettle-drum accompanied with cymbals—only not quite so musically. Still as the tattoo ceases, the old original headache begins . . .

'Do you ever miss us?' (will you ever ask that again, say I)—Most at tea-time & music-time after it. I don't wonder you miss me—who is there to *snub* you now till the tears come, & to be as rough even in his caresses as 'the lion dandling the kid'? . . .

Well write to me, & make the other two birds, tho I do give such fierce scratches amidst my fondness. Tell me all your deeds, & misdeeds (such as selling your pocket-handkerchiefs to go to the play)—send me Saidie's last witticism, & Jane's last naiveté—you cannot write too often—recollect you are three, & that altho' I may at times be unable to

reply soon from pressure of business, I have always as much leisure as pleasure to read your letters

Ever ever your's

G. B. Darley.

The year finishes with an affectionate letter of 23 December to Laura, which asks about the progress of their portraits, the group that was being painted by Mr. Burton, afterwards Sir Frederic Burton, director of the National Gallery, London.

The correspondence increases in regularity and volume during 1845, which opens with a letter to Mary Jane written on New Year's Day. After inquiries about the Christmas festivities, her Irish Songs, and the Corelli sonatas he has sent over, he indulges in advice.

'By the bye, don't any of ye marry an American—I dread that agreeable Yankee you speak of—he'll catch one of my birds, the wild-cat! & carry her off to the Backwoods, whence she will never escape from his clutches. Still *he* might as well have you as the "Corn-factor" for when you do get husbands you will all (even Poppie herself) become such dreadfully good wives & mothers & housekeepers, (*you* in particular!) that it will make little difference whether an Atlantic or an Irish Channel runs between us. Don't, my dear Girls, should you get ever so uxorious spouses, become mere *Joans*, like too many of your sex—it is quite possible to combine your domestic with your social duties—all the virtues of married life are not restricted to the nursery & the store-room. You see I can lecture upon matrimonial subjects with as grave a face as upon musical. But indeed with more solicitude, if still less experience—because I dislike—abhor everything which tends to lower *the tone of the human mind*. Marriage too often does so. . . .'

When writing on 23 January to the youngest sister Henrietta, otherwise Pennie, he mentions his father's death, and he uses terms which make it plain that little sympathy existed between them. He praises Pennie's gay little note.

'Your description of the Christmas fête was as good as a magic mirror—it set the very scene before me—I beheld the wondrous *caracoles* & Grandpapa's mingled expression of mischievous enjoyment & apprehension—nay his exclamations, issuing as plain from both sides of his mouth as if written on labels. . . .'

He has just five little minutes for Laura, otherwise Poppie, on 29 January.

' . . . If you can gather up a few intellectual crumbs from me now & then, be satisfied—'tis all the good I hope to do you. Did you ever read

Hayley's "Serena, or the Triumphs of Temper"? It would be a triumph of your's to do so with patience—but I have a mind to write "Tempests or the Triumphs of Temper", i.e. *bad* temper, which often triumphs over my philosophy. Ask Marybird . . .

'Your uncle Richard called, but I have not seen him—he left a massive old silver purse-clasp, an heir-loom, & bequest from my father. Do you know it made me think I had a heart? for a something or other swelled within me at the sight. Dont I love Poppie, you'll say—& isn't that proof of some heart? Well I dont know how this may be, but the sun never made such an illumination in my room as her bright little face will cause there the day she visits me. . . .'

Mary Jane's next letter contains an affectionate scolding Its predecessor was evidently not preserved.

(To Miss Darley
7 Kildare Street
Dublin)

6 Lower Belgrave St South
3 Feb. 45.

Dearest little Bird

My month's task of literary scribblement has just been drudged thro'—so I can give my pen playtime & pleasant exercise at once in writing you what heart prompts, not head—for the one is a 'seat of the soul' as well as the other. Do you recollect Addison's amiable irony upon the whereabouts of the said divine particle? No matter—but recollect *my* heart is a spleen—at least half & half—therefore don't blame me when that which you call my 'nice' style suddenly becomes acrimonious—blame Nature who made me part human creature, part a laughing hyena. I do feel bytimes as if I had supped upon stewed crab-apples served up in vinegar sauce, & garnished with sloe-leaves. At Stillorgan-Park it once or twice struck me that the other dear girls understood this criss-cross disposition of mine better than you, my chosen confidante, for whom I have long made a window in my heart to peep through & find me out! Now shall I lecture you? It is because you are too common-sensible that you won't let your mind get at truths by irregular glimpses, but must have downright matter-of-fact This was Aunt Fanny's teaching. She has never reflected on the different powers of human faculties—seems quite to forget imagination is as much a *gift of heaven* as common sense, & therefore should not be sneered at. The highest truths are reached by flights of imagination—the delicate & otherwise imperceptible shades of thought are discovered by flashes of that divine faculty, and would be gone for ever if you sent slow-footed common sense at a careful jog-trot after them. I should give myself no trouble in explaining this were you unable to comprehend it—indeed you understood it before as well as myself, but have been oracled out of your own con-

victions. Will you take me as an opposition oracle? No, I am not an opposer of common-sense—am neither all Aunt Fannyism for it, nor all A L G-ism against it. Common sense & imagination are not incompatible, & their *union* forms a far better mind than either of them separate. Don't dis sever them in your own mind, you little Repealer! Be assured common-sense (like 'marriage') tends to lower the tone of the mind, & imagination to elevate it. But I quite agree with you that the latter, if it soar beyond bounds, leaves the mind in the clouds, or brings it back mystified. O dear little wretch, how I have metaphysicked you to death—forgive me having killed you this once, & I'll never do it again if I can help it!

What upon earth is that nice style of mine you mention? Just give me an idea of it & I'll endeavor to adopt it always. No, I won't—let it come 'natural', or it will never be nice anymore. Perhaps it means *loving*—that will come without effort.

I am glad my splenetic outbursts against Henry have drawn forth your evidence in his favor. You know him better than he would ever let me. It reminds me of what your last letter says about my poor father—'he seems more at home with Mr. T . . 's family than his own people'. I fear this sentence too much characterizes all the Arthur-Darleys! . . . Don't you think with me that affectionateness, the first of all the charities, should begin at home? It need by no means, like charity in general, end there too, as well as begin. 'Tis much to learn of his kind-heartedness towards you—but why so indifferent towards me who was ever over-fond of him—and never offended him by word or deed as I have others thro' passion or a soured disposition? Nay many a battle did I fight for him—some of my fiercest altercations were in his defence. I considered him more a *son* than a brother.¹ You see dearest Girl, my feelings *will* vent themselves—if not into your faithful little bosom, they will be discharged into some one less partial to him, or my own heart would burst. I never 'hint' anything against anyone—I speak my thoughts out plain, & rather pride myself on the pointedness of my sarcasms which cannot be mistaken. But whatever my last letter to you said, I have often said *to himself*—venom will not rest with me, I must spit it, and then am rid of it. Is not this better than to have it rankle & fester in my heart? Now I feel at ease. The bond between him & me was the last tie which held me to my family—it is broken, and welcome utter recklessness!

I *do* often 'feel lonely without you'—& sometimes regret having been so happy among you (no I don't—yes but I do—well which way shall I decide?). It gratifies me to think you too wish sometimes for 'dear Fadladeen' (O how dear indeed!) 'beside you'. So with love to Saidee and all the loved, *Meine liebe Marrechen, leben Sie wohl!*

¹ Henry, the land agent, was born in 1802, he was thus the poet's junior by seven years.

To Laura, on 8 February [1845], go answers to certain literary questions

'.. Now let me answer dear H—— L——'s question Alfred Tennyson the poet cannot well be her long-ago friend, as he is still a young man—but I do recollect his once mentioning that Tennyson D'Eyncourt was a relative of his, I forget how near or distant. Alfred lives in a kind of genteel vagrancy, heaven knows where—or I would ask him particulars. Would Aunt H. wish me to do so or not, when he & I next meet? ..

'You must have me issue a bulletin of my health, must you—as if it were of such consequence to the empire! Well—Caliban was never racked by more pains & aches & petty tortures at Prospero's bidding than beset me from top to toe—but not one appears dignified enough for specification, tho all together disable me from strenuous continuous effort I can now just write such a note as this—no more!—my business is at a stand thro' headache—that's the reason I am & always shall be a poor devil. . . .

'Longfellow's ugly unpoetic name has met my eyes, & some of his verse—but these American metre-mongers are mere apes of our poets, & of the worst among them, the modern, popular sort. When they borrow our *mund*, I wish they would do as when they borrow our *money*—never give it us back again! You see I am somewhat a critic—any person who reads, & reflects must be so, or a born blockhead—but a criticiser is my scorn, i e. one that makes a solemn hubbub about insignificant faults, & loves criticism *for its own sake* instead of truth & appreciation of merit Recollect dearest pupil, you never can understand beauty aright without studying deformity too—one teaches the other. . . .'

A month later he issues a general command.

(To Miss M L H. Darley,
7 Kildare Street, Dublin.)

Parthenon Club.
5 March (1845).

Write, you three little hussies—I'm too busy now, & have no time!
Fiddle faddleaden.

P.S. Marykin's & Pennykin's letters of last month received.

On 24 March [1845] he attempts to give Henrietta the 'nice' scolding she has asked for. There is a chance that she and Laura may visit the Continent shortly; if they come to London he asks for notice of their arrival, since a surprise makes him nervous and awkward. He ends:

'You are quite a portrait-painter—I have Arturo from your description, so graphic & faithful, clear before my mind's eye—his benevolent

face, with the pleasant red roughness of a russetin-apple, glistening among his trees where you give me glimpses of him dressed *à la Chinoise* So I am as good as a ghost, haunting my little attic in his house, & keeping you away from it! Odd enough that the same spirit lingering there should attract him For it does linger there, & every place else dear Girl it ever visited with you. . . .’

Laura likewise receives, on 11 April, a scolding for stealing his heart, but the gaiety is forced. His mood is more truly stated in such sentences as, ‘All appears waste & desolate & blank around me’ and ‘throughout life my affections have been too exclusive’. Laura has questioned the excellence of his advice.

‘You rightly object to my over-strong word “studying”—I should not have recommended the *study of deformity*, but my meaning was that the study of beauty will never teach the full & perfect knowledge of beauty, without a reference to its opposite likewise Beauty & Deformity are *correlative* terms, & you can never know what either is, if you remain ignorant of the other. Thus you appreciate Miss Faucit’s Antigone because you compare it with the heroines of some indifferent modern tragedies performed by indifferent actresses—tho’ you may not be conscious of doing so, you nevertheless do so, & must. The better you understand the imperfect, the better you will understand the perfect, and thus you attain a pure critical taste by gradual ascent from a lower to a higher standard Have I pedantized too much? Well I’m done! . . .’

The most interesting part of Mary’s letter (the Jane has for some time been discarded) of 28 April is the beginning.

‘I have been rather busy dearest Mariechen since Spring began—which is my hay-making time, for then the sun shines strongest on us literary laborers. That has occasioned the delay of this notikum—and not my forgetfulness of you, bonnibel! Indeed how could I forget you, when your letter has lain ever since it was first read, before my eyes, on my writing table? I could not look up from my book or paper but there it brightened! there the sweet little remembrancer saluted me with its violet scent—“pansies, that’s for thoughts” as poor Ophelia tells us Did you ever imagine you saw in her character the original of Sterne’s *Maria*? Sterne you know was a most remorseless, but most skilful plagiarist—were you old-fashioned enough to read Burton’s “Anatomy of Melancholy”, Sterne’s odd, quaint manner would often meet you odder and quainter there still—*earnest* too, instead of assumed & affected. . . .

‘There is *one* snake-een in Ireland at all events! Forget you? not till I forget myself. Do *you* remember the green deep slopes beyond St. Kevin’s Bed, running down aslant from the hill top into the Lake—and the sun-drops sparkling on the black surface of the water—and the three Mermaids that wiled with their songs another Anchorite. . . .’

'But you may tell me—physician heal thyself! Indeed last winter (three winters in one) gave my fragile constitution a shock it feels yet, & will do so till I can feel no more I shall never go thro' another London winter with any firmness The sands of life indeed I perceive are beginning to crumble down within me, and will soon all run to dust. This is as it should be—I little regret an existence which has for me very few attractions . . .

'Miss Faucit often pleases but never enraptures me—however I have seen Miss O'Neill, & besides am you know, ever your's little bonnibel, Fadladeen.'

When the two sonnets given to Laura were printed in the *Athenæum* ('a little altered, perhaps improved') a copy of the review was sent to her, on 11 May, with 'Love to all, except Penny. She is no longer a penny sterling, not worth a farthing, tell her' But before the letter went it received an addition.

'Pennie's letter just arrived—She is my own dear little tatter-de-mahon again! Well, you *are* coming I hope Yes I did get the scrumpshin of gown you sent me—it is a very delicate tint. I'll send you in return a lock of my new peruke for your critical opinion—and Mariechen a pattern of my new trowsers, for hers See how I can't forbear saying the odious things amidst all my fondness Tis that which has always made your sex hate me after the first acquaintance—& so been one means of keeping me an old bachelor'

The visit projected in March seemed to be getting farther away It is the subject of another inquiry, to Henrietta on 30 May; the first week in June had been mentioned as the revised date. But he was to be disappointed.

(To Miss L. F. Darley
7 Kildare Street, Dublin.)

(Parthenon Club, London)
2^d July 1845

Once upon a time ago
I loved little Poppie—
Do I love her now? O no!
Not a tittle better than
A monstrous-great fierce Orangeman
Could love a little Croppie.
But if she will take a snip
Of paper (Bath or copy)
And her pen in ink will dip
And write me a nice notikin
I may care a little pin
Perhaps again for Poppie!

When I've no time to write, I can scribble verses. Fadladeen.

The above was just about to go when your dear little notikin arrived. How sorrowful it makes me! My poor little Mariechen not well—& you two *mavourneens* not coming! It is fortunate I am now overhead in business, or I should fret heartstrings till they broke. After this week my hurry will be over, & then I'll answer at large *all* your last letters

Ever your's Astore,

G Springfield

Another and much heavier blow fell soon. His youngest brother Henry, the most attractive of them all and a general favourite, was stricken by paralysis. Darley had often, in his letters, regretted Henry's indifference and railed on him for the alienation that followed on their different ideas of life. It is evident that Henry's was the affection he most desired to win. The letters, those to Mary in particular, express the liveliest concern and most urgent solicitude for his brother's welfare, and abound in anxious demands for exact intelligence of his illness. He is filled with 'envious chagrin' to think that he cannot soothe and console as can Charles, acknowledging, though with reservation, that because he has seen little of Henry since he was a boy, he may comprehend him ill. 'It is very possible that his indifference towards myself may have swayed me unawares—forgetful how well such indifference was deserved by so unamiable and disagreeable a person as I am'; but, 'still I do think he loved the excitements of the world too well . . .' He begs Mary to see with her own eyes and report. Her opinion is worth more to him than that of the whole College of Physicians since she understands better the Darley mind 'which has so much to do in all our ailments'. From the first he takes a gloomy view and expects no recovery. In this he was justified by the event, for Henry's death took place in the November of next year, about a week before his own.

The letters to Ireland—and they have not all been preserved—are for a time largely devoted to this great shock. Their tone on all matters is heavy with gloom. On 28 July, when writing to Mary of his own inability to inspire love, he says.

'Why my dear girl I positively refrain from seeing my friends through dread of losing them! Now you'll exclaim—"that's sheer monomania". Not a bit of it—downright practical commonsense. I never kept much of any person's society without in the end feeling & knowing myself far less liked than when I entered it first. I must bury myself alive to be loved at all—this was the reason I left you so soon, that I might *secure* whatever affection you had towards me.'

On 12 August, likewise to Mary:

'I have not yet spent even² a day in the country Do you know I feel little care about it? Everything has lost its savour—the grass looks as gray as dust, the trees stand like mere obstacles in my path thro' St James's Park—I eat & drink things without goût—even the very people pass me like shadows, they all look like one-another. This fit of apathy will pass over soon—and some friends are doing what they can just now to dispel it I shall go next week it is probable to Sussex for a fortnight—first to Lord Headley's (where I have never been yet¹), & then to Archdeacon Hare's at Herstonceux The poor Archdⁿ has but now lost his Brother, his only remaining Brother!¹ I wished of course to put off my visit—however Mrs Hare writes today that I must pay it, & as she had given me *very serious advice* about my gloominess of late, telling me it was so bold and bad-boy a thing, I am obliged to make the effort or she will think me huffed perhaps, when quite pleased that anyone should care enough for me to lecture me for impatience of life & its sorrows. . . .'²

A letter³ next day to Henrietta was followed by one to Laura on the 16th. Mary's 'commonsense' has been of such service that this attribute is to be forgiven her.

'You & I, Poppie, wild Irish people as we are, cannot but admit that the greatest mind is the mind which comprehends most of the mental qualities, and is incomplete without the one above said. No person indeed will contest this, except those who want hoop wide enough of capacity to embrace & hold firm together both the solid staves & the inspiring wine within them. Very few there be who can amalgamate *fire & water*—yet every first-rate genius does so when he combines imagination & judgment—hence it comes we have such intellectual miracle-workers by units at long intervals, never by dozens at once as we have fancy mongers & other "choice spirits" with brain in but one side of their heads alone. . . .

'Have you learned a second song yet . . .? Or have you done one single bit of good since I saw you, but wind your graceful way thro' the house looping up your negligent locks every minute with your left hand, & making everybody smile that listens to your slipshod piquancies or even looks at you? How is it possible I should love such an idle, such a very sad little personage? Is it because you hadn't read "Gray's Elegy", you illiterate young woman you? . . .

'I have had beds of poppies around me these two months—they were

¹ Marcus Hare.

² Julius Hare (1795–1855) had, in 1844, married Esther, a sister of Frederick Maurice For a not very alluring picture of Aunt Esther's rule at the Rectory by a nephew who loathed the lady, see Augustus J. C. Hare's *The Story of My Life* (1896), vol. 1, pp. 178 onwards.

splendid—now, like most things beautiful, after a brief triumph faded & gone. They were always a favourite wild flower with me, but of late I observe are become ornaments of the parterre. I need not tell you they always reminded me (which was very needful) of one still more a favorite—perhaps because a wild flower indeed, quite uncultivated! What d'ye think Ma'am of a young lady who never read Gray's *Elegy*? O shocking I declare!

'Do your portraits progress? It is now almost a year since they were begun. I suspect Mr Burton employs himself rather in educating his mind than his hand—that is the nobler object, but this the better for his worldly interests. Perhaps like myself he thinks money far from the most precious of all commodities—he seemed I thought rather above a mere painter. But I wish he would finish your portraits, as A. L. G. promised me the sketch. . '

The visit to Hurstmonceaux, undertaken at so unhappy a time, did not relieve his wretchedness. Formerly he had delighted in the society there and the library overflowing the whole house, but worse news of his brother increased his despondency.¹ Writing to Mary on 26 August from the Rectory, he says.

'True enough as you guess Mary love I do not enjoy myself here—even here amongst such beautiful scenes, so many comforts & beyond everything else the kindest, most amiable, most agreeable friends. I long to be back in my own little solitude again. With a mind ill at ease, spirits depressed, bodily health wretched, the "feast of reason" itself loses its savour, "the flow of soul" is less welcome than a flow of tears. I pass the churchyard with a sigh that I am not beneath its sod, where all looks so peaceful—it affords the only home I should prefer to my hermitage in London. Well! the time must come soon, & perhaps will, sooner than expected.'

Two letters at this point are missing. The next, to Mary on 10 September, is from a room overlooking the Luxembourg Gardens in No. 30 Rue de Vaugirard. He tells of his passage from Brighton to Dieppe ('nine hours of sixty million minutes length each'), and describes for her what little he saw of the French port and Rouen, where he was able to take train for Paris. The purpose of his journey was to consult a physician. 'I shall have to remain bed-ridden I fear some time—my illness is not dangerous, the physician says, tedious alone. Along with my usual complaint it almost overpowered me, & 'twas well I came

¹ Augustus J. C. Hare, in his very discursive autobiography, describing under the date 1843 the varied society entertained by his uncle Julius, mentions Darley among those guests whom he himself liked.

here at once, if continued existence be any object.' And again 'My physician was with me today, & performed a slight sharp operation—I feel myself better—it will have to be repeated I conjecture, perhaps often, & may keep me confined rather long This is the unpleasantest feature about it—don't suppose it (any illness I mean) anything beyond a trifle' The next letter to Mary—of 12 December from the same address—tells her that much against his will he may have to remain till March or April. 'Yet the illness which brought me here was never serious & is now trivial enough—nevertheless all the symptoms have to be dispelled before I leave Paris . . .' His loneliness has been lightened by his brother William and the attentions of the Charles D'Arleys, cousins settled in Paris. His only excursion was to Versailles.

' . . I did creep along some few of the green alleys & gravelled terraces—where le grand Monarque & his splendid court have often paced—and their shadows appeared still to accompany me Imagination easily conjured up the visions of bygone scenes & personages, for there was scarce a living object of the present world within view, & every nook seemed a retreat in which some spirit of the past had sequestered itself I almost felt a beautiful spectre now & then rustle her point-lace & brocaded petticoat past me, and heard faint love-whispers close to me from the invisible beaux & belles who still haunted their ancient rendez-vous. Alas! on awaking, how forlorn the once gay-crowded gardens looked! . . .

'Are your portraits finished? I fear not It gave me real concern that Mr Burton was obliged by ill-health to travel. . . . Do you visit Stillorgan Park often—I should like to have a labyrinthian ramble among the leafless woods with you now—I almost prefer those "High Mightinesses"—the trees—in their *bare* attire of green moss-patches and yellowish lichen embroidering their bark like a delicate sprig pattern, to the same tall vegetators when full clad in their verdant summer clothes Give their kindhearted master my best regards—my love to the swans & the tortoise!'

The Louvre and matters of art occupied much of his time in Paris. From there between October and the middle of April he sent six papers to the *Athenæum*, including one of his most important critical efforts, 'The Mission of Amateurs'. These papers had been preceded by five on Genoa, not in his best vein, evidently worked up from notes made on the spot in some previous year. He returned to London a little improved in health at the end of April 1846, when he was able to choose a calm day for the crossing. But it is evident that he was far from well.

Work as a means to life claimed him at once, before he was strong enough to do it. In a letter to Laura, written from the Parthenon Club, Regent Street, on 11 May, he talks of his arrears of business, and the 'time and money' he has lost through illness. There are references also to a relapse and 'three or four months continued pain & dispiritment in France' which show that he had concealed the full truth from Mary. A visit to Stillorgan Park is out of the question, would indeed seem utter darkness after the sunshine of the last. 'Take a gray, crag-shaped house half-way up the Three-Rocked Mountain, with a few acres of furze around it, & I'll visit you all there next year—perhaps take a *cromlech* myself beside it, turn Druid, & become the bard of the family.' His immediate task is to find convenient lodgings; at present he is 'no-where' and his manuscripts lie huddled together at a bookseller's shop. To Henrietta, on 28 May, he is not more cheerful. Though she is coming to Harrogate with her mother to drink the waters he has no hope of seeing her. 'All my monies (& more) have been laid out upon Doctors.' He attempts to rally her, but only, as he confesses, in order to shun every serious allusion. 'Recollect you mustn't be getting married at the Spa—it's a terrible place for such mal-practices. I'll never forgive you, unless indeed you marry a Londoner, and come to settle beside me. Stay, I won't even forgive that—you must *all three* remain single for my particular convenience.' A letter to Mary of 12 June continues the tale of worry and discomfort. 'Ever since my return, I've done nothing but scribble scribble scribble . . . you may imagine that . . . I must have great arrears of business on my hands—& be chin-deep in debt.' And later, 'I have resolved to laugh away—fool away the rest of this existence as far as possible.' He mentions the portrait, now almost finished: 'So you have secured white, you monopolist of the "principal light!"'—and threatens, if his nose has been put out of joint by a certain insinuating musical parson, to take up with some tender old Tabbie in return. Incessant work and sweltering weather, however, soon had their effect. An undated note to Henrietta (evidently of mid-July) announces that having been brought 'to the complexion of a mutton-candle' he intends to take refuge in the country.

He went, accordingly, to Surrey, and his letters from there describing his surroundings are happier in tone. The first to Laura (of 27 July) is succeeded by these to Mary and Henrietta.

(To Miss Darley
7 Kildare Street
Dublin)

Worplesdon, Guildford, Surrey.
7 Aug^t [1846].

Here I *beez* in one of those rural residences called beautiful by the clod-pated English. It is well enough—the house very habitable even for its previous titled possessors, the lawn full-planted, & the garden stocked with esculent roots & fruit-trees, vipers & toads, the venomous things almost as numerous as the vegetable—a huge pond outside and a large heath or common. This last has I grant some beauty about it—but I'd rather have little *Tic-knock* than the whole place! Give me wild, barren, haggard mountain scenes in preference to all these close, well-cultivated messuages & manors. Above all plenty of *grey rock*! Barnaslingen & Killeager gave me a taste for it long long ago, and our rambles a year or two since confirmed my prepossessions. I remember feeling quite out of humour with the Alps because they had not rock enough, & what they had was of an insipid mud-brown colour—they seemed little better than immense heaps of dirt hidden by monotonous pine-woods—not one of them half so beautiful as either of the Scalp Mountains aforesaid. Dont you agree with me? if you don't, I hope you'll be married to some rich English cit who will shut you up in some horrid, comfortable smuggery of his on the outskirts of London where you'll spend your whole life among Yorkshire hams and Cheshire cheeses, nor ever travel farther than the hot-house or the melon-bed or the arbour at the end of the high-walled garden from which the peaches & plums plop upon you of themselves. And so you'll be condemned to live on the fat of the land for your unromantic taste, & I, who live on the *lean* of it, will enjoy your punishment! . . .

I left your last letter in town by mistake on coming here, where it was my intention to answer it. And I quite forget if it contained any question of particular moment. Excuse a scatter-brained poet. Indeed I felt myself more than usually distracted when quitting town, for a family of uproarious children & a most vociferous *canary bird* (that made the house ring with its unmusical twitter) had just come into the rooms next mine at my lodgings. They drove every thought away, & myself too—Indignation indites verses, it is said—here are mine on the occasion of my annoyance:

Little angel boys
Are devils for noise—
When little girls riot,
Devils cannot come nigh it!

What d'ye think of my poetry? . . .

Now I remember, just this very moment, that your last letter told me you did not spend so agreeable a time at A. L. G.'s as when Fadladeen

was there—how I rejoiced! Indeed I should have felt a little glad if you told me you were all *tolerably miserable* without me. It doesn't look very serious to say so—and still I'm afraid it's true enough. Yes! it would have given me positive pleasure to think you had been downright disconsolate & discontented—there's the naked fact, & I may as well confess it as pretend to wish you hadn't regretted my absence when I didn't wish any such thing.

How are poor Jane & her babes? . . Give my love to Poppie, & believe me ever your's dearest little Girl,

G. B.

(To Miss H. H. Darley,
1 Cheltenham Place
Harrogate.

Low Harrogate.)

Perry Hill. Worplesdon. Guildford
Surrey 17 Aug^t [1846]

Both your letters have reached me my best of good girls—the last but two days since, and see how good a boy I am to answer it already! . . I can't scribble a line for money except when alone & in town—my thoughts wander in the country, & spurn all control & direction to any one purpose. Not that Perry Hill is a bit of Paradise dropped from the sky on Worplesdon heath, but—I must mend my pen to describe it—its *nib* is too hard & 'twon't write free—I love a long elastic one that lets me flourish away at full swing, & cut extravaganzas as fanciful as a cow makes with her tail when stung by a gadfly. D'ye understand me? It is like the pleasure one has in flourishing a whip with a long lash—it seems to pull strength out of your arm whether you will or no. Of all my aversions a steel pen horrifies me the most—quite paralyzes my fingers—when it sticks in the paper (as it surely does with me) it stabs me dead for the moment. Really I have scribbled this last half-page just from the sense of perfect freedom after that dreadful stiff nib my laziness prevented me altering. Don't you think me a little maddish? 'Not a *little*' sez you! But now my quill has had its flight I drop down to Perry Hill again, & promise you a statutorial account of it as sober as a land-surveyor could furnish. Think what a clodpated old crone Gammer Nature must have been when she made Worplesdon heath without a single *rock* upon it—not a pebble the size of an alderman's agate or Queen Mab's ear-ring itself, upon the whole tame unbroken surface! Would Mrs Nature have dared to do this in Ireland?

Her youthful hand

Made Erin's land

And then it lumped up England O!

Still there's a rich field of heather, broom, & genuine furze (called *gorse* here, not a bad word let me tell you), with green pasture-like walks, spreading far & wide to wooded meadows & rather odious cornfields

beyond I don't altogether detest a fine cultivated scene, but it has no business to encroach on my beloved barrennesses.

Perry-Hill house is most prosaically comfortable—none of those picturesque inconveniences we have in Ireland. A great many majestic trees however near it give it bytimes quite a Springfield dampness, that much recommends it to me, whatever it may do to its winter & spring habitants. Outside the lawn a large piece of water (I fear a *horsepond*) spreads to the heath—ducks are its only swans, & what's worse they are not white but tabby ones. A neat little antique Church crowns the hill—guess its companion! a huge eight-sided edifice taller than the church tower, covered with *yellow* whitewash, & every alternate window blind, a pole on the top, like a candle end stuck in a loaf,—& this is the 'Semaphore', a kind of gigantic stand for a governmental telegraph! Did you ever know such barbarians as these English—the most civilized people in the world? Truth obliges me to confess there are some beautiful walks hereabouts—the green, winding, deep-hedged lane is the peculiar boast of England—one close by, and a sequestered grove of oaks (all glimmer above & checquer beneath) are my daily retreat. For the kind good people I am with (three ladies *beyond* 'a certain age'—one indeed quite old) allow me to do just as I please, & be sullen or social according to my humour. Sometimes it pleaseth my morose High-Mightiness to have myself all to myself, & that 'sometimes' occurs every morning & lasts till dinner-hour when my stomach if not my heart renders me gregarious. Of an evening I honour the circle with my presence, & utter oracles for its edification. But I must go back to London next week as I told you, & eat independent mutton chops. .

I should like to have heard more from you concerning Studley & Bolton, above all 'Forest Lane'—your few words set my thoughts a-gadding, & made me wish myself beside you for some of those delicious rambles. But don't attempt to think any of them half so beautiful as a wild range over the Three-Rocked Mountain! A single fern of it is worth a whole English forest. . . .

I don't believe one syllable of your demed 'firtations'! D'ye suppose I forget your goings-on with Mr. B—, & Mr. Z—, & Mr. X—, &c, &c? 'That's 'snothin'!' you'll answer. Wasn't it on your account Mr. Kelly, the gardener, listed in the Light Dragoons? O you dreadful, dear little girl, goodbye—ain't you glad my letter is ended at long & last?

Ever your's, while this vessel is to me,
the Lord Fadladeen.

Only for a little longer was the crumbling house of clay to cabin and vex his spirit. He returned to his labours in London and to rooms at No. 2 Belgrave Street, South Eaton Square, with bodily powers unequal to their task. What was to be his last review for the *Athenæum*—that on the second volume of Ruskin's

Modern Painters—had been printed on 25 July. For some time he endured, in straitened circumstances, the discomforts of serious illness among strangers in a boarding-house, but eventually, when friends in Ireland heard of his state, two of his cousins, Jane Swale and her sister Frances (often mentioned with affection in his letters) came to nurse him. His mind was undimmed; a few days before his death he sent to the *Athenæum* a note on Dante's Beatrice. But the will to live, long feeble, gradually grew weaker. His end was as unobtrusive as his life, rather a gentle flickering out of a threatened flame than a struggle with death. He died on Monday, 23 November 1846, of, we are told, a decline, and he was buried in Kensal Green cemetery.

Hessey, writing to John Taylor on 24 November, says:

'I am indeed shocked and grieved to hear of the very unexpected death of our dear and excellent friend George Darley. . . I regret much, now that it is too late, that I was ignorant of his illness for I should have been most glad to visit him and afford him such comforts as in a Bachelor's establishment are frequently wanting. . . . He was one of the real worthies of the earth. . . .'

We could wish for no more eloquent words to finish with than this tribute from a friend.

BIBLIOGRAPHY OF THE WORKS OF GEORGE DARLEY

POETRY AND DRAMA

1 The Errors of Ecstasie A Dramatic Poem. With Other Pieces. By George Darley. London. Printed for G. and W. B. Whittaker, Ave-Maria-Lane. 1822 Pp vii, 72

[Dedication, p. iii, 'To Mrs. N. Colthurst, according to promise, this poem is inscribed by the author.']

[The uncut copy I have used is sewn into plain brown-paper wrappers, and on the outside Darley has written—Errors indeed!]

2 Sylvia; or, The May Queen. A Lyrical Drama By George Darley London. Published for John Taylor, Waterloo Place, Pall-Mall, by James Duncan, Paternoster-Row; and sold by J. A. Hessey, Fleet Street, and John Hatchard and Son, Piccadilly 1827 Pp vii, 217

3. Nepenthe. By George Darley. London. 1835. Pp. 69.

[The heading to each of the two cantos is simply 'Nepenthe'. At the end is printed 'A THIRD PART IS TO FOLLOW' The British Museum copy of this poem is imperfect The title-page and pp. 39-42 are wanting, pp. 67-69 are in duplicate Miss Evelyn Darley possesses two copies (a) as issued in the original plain olive-brown paper wrappers, (b) a presentation copy to the poet's cousin, Dr Darley, inscribed by the poet 'A Fragmentary Sketch. Cantos I & II, 'Ἀριστον μέτρον'. This copy is bound up with a presentation copy of *Sylvia*, and is therefore cut Miss F. L. Henderson has an uncut copy in the original wrappers inscribed 'Fragmentary Cantos I & II. 'Ἀρισ[τ]ον μέτρον. G D.' This copy is annotated throughout by Darley.]

4. Thomas à Becket. A Dramatic Chronicle In Five Acts. By George Darley, Author of 'Sylvia, or the May-Queen', etc. London. Edward Moxon, Dover Street, MDCCCXL. Pp. vi, 144.

5. Ethelstan; or, The Battle of Brunanburh A Dramatic Chronicle. In Five Acts. By George Darley, author of 'Thomas à Becket'. London. Edward Moxon, Dover Street, MDCCCXLI. Pp vi, 95.

[Dedication, p. iii, 'To the Authoress of all my better thoughts, Quietude, this work is most lovingly inscribed by her adopted son, the Writer']

6. Poems of the late George Darley. A memorial Volume printed for private circulation. [Quotation from Shelley.] Copies may be

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obtained from A. Holden, Church Street, Liverpool. [1890.] Table of Contents pp. v-viii; Memoir pp. 1-31; *Lenimina Laborum* pp 33-167, Poems. Chiefly from 'Labours of Idleness' and 'Errors of Ecstasie', pp 169-211.

[This book, which printed all but four cancelled pieces of the poet's MS. *Lenimina Laborum*, was the first important posthumous contribution to Darley literature. It was due to Darley's kinsfolk, Canon and the Hon. Mrs Livingstone]

7. *Sylvia or the May Queen* A Lyrical Drama by George Darley Introduction by John H. Ingram 1892. London, J. M. Dent and Co., 69 Gt. Eastern Street. The Lovers' Library. The edition consisted of five hundred small and one hundred large paper copies. Pp. xxx, 200

[Biographical sketch, not always reliable, pp v-xxvii; author's preface pp xxx-xxx, facsimile of Darley's handwriting p. xxxi; text pp. 32-200]

8. *Nepenthe*. A Poem in Two Cantos. By George Darley. With an introduction by R. A. Streatfeild. London, Elkin Mathews, Vigo Street MD CCCXCVII. Pp. xvi, 61

The frontispiece [illustrating the lines O blest unfabled incense tree / That burns in glorious Araby] designed and cut on the wood by L. Binyon

[Printed from the imperfect British Museum copy]

9. Selections from the Poems of George Darley With an Introduction and Notes by R. A. Streatfeild With a Frontispiece [part of Bacchic Thiasus—Gaius] London: Methuen and Co., 36 Essex Street, W.C. The Little Library MD CCCCV. Pp. lv, 180.

[The late Mr. Streatfeild was a devoted admirer of Darley. This book contains several poems not before reprinted, and a complete text of *Nepenthe* (though the punctuation is silently altered by the editor). There is an interesting general introduction, based in part on the editor's article on Darley published in the *Quarterly Review* for July 1902.]

10. The Complete Poetical Works of George Darley now first collected, reprinted from the rare original editions in the possession of the Darley family, and edited with an Introduction by Ramsay Colles. London: George Routledge and Sons. The Muses' Library. [1908] Pp. xxxviii, 538.

[This book first brought together the bulk of Darley's poetry. It reprints (1)-(5) above; appropriates, by permission, the new matter revealed in (6) and (9); and adds a few uncollected things. But it does not establish a critical text; and a minimum of search would have shown that it was far from complete.]

PROSE

1 The Labours of Idleness, or, Seven Nights' Entertainments By Guy Penseval. London Printed for John Taylor, Waterloo-Place, Pall-Mall 1826 Pp 330

Contains Epistle Dedicatory. The Enchanted Lyre: with Remains and Remarks. Love's Devotion Pedro Ladron, or the Shepherd of Topple-down Hill. Aileen-Astore; or the Glen of the Grave. The Dead Man's Dream Ellinore. Lillian of the Vale

2 A System of Popular Geometry; containing in a few lessons so much of the Elements of Euclid as is necessary and sufficient for a right understanding of every Art and Science in its leading truths and general principles By George Darley, A B. London: Printed for John Taylor, . . 1826. Pp 144.

Fifth Edition 1844.

3 A System of Popular Algebra, containing in a few lessons as much as is necessary and sufficient for a right understanding of every Art and Science in its leading truths and general principles With a section on Proportions and Progressions By George Darley, A B London Printed for John Taylor, . . . 1827. Pp. xx, 143.

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